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THE BIBLE AS THE ROOT OF WESTERN LITERATURE: STORIES, POEMS, AND PARABLES

COURSE GUIDE

Professor Adam Potkay with
Professor Monica Brzezinski Potkay
THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY

The Bible as the Root of Western Literature:
Stories, Poems, and Parables

Professor Adam Potkay with
Professor Monica Brzezinski Potkay
The College of William and Mary

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The Bible as the Root of Western Literature:
Stories, Poems, and Parables

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Stories, Poems, and Parables

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Photo courtesy of Adam Potkay

About Your Professor

Adam Potkay

Adam Potkay is a professor of English at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, where he has taught since 1990; he has also been a visiting professor at Columbia University and at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland. He holds degrees from Cornell University (B.A., 1982), the Johns Hopkins University (M.A., 1986), and Rutgers University (Ph.D., 1990).

In the fall of 1999, Adam Potkay designed a popular Bible and literature lecture course with his wife and fellow College of William and Mary professor, Monica Brzezinski Potkay. They continue to teach this acclaimed class annually, and have distilled fourteen of their most popular lectures for this course. In 1996, the Potkays were jointly honored with the College of William and Mary's Alumni Fellowship Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Adam Potkay is also an internationally recognized scholar of eighteenth-century literature and culture. His numerous publications include *The Passion for Happiness: Samuel Johnson and David Hume* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2000) and *The Fate of Eloquence in the Age of Hume* (Cornell University Press, 1994). He is the coeditor (with Sandra Burr) of a collection of autobiographies and sermons by some of the earliest black writers in English, *Black Atlantic Writers of the Eighteenth Century: Living the New Exodus in England and the Americas* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995). He has published scholarly articles and more popular essays in a wide variety of journals, from *18th-Century Studies* and *Studies in Early Modern Philosophy* to *Philosophy Now* and *Raritan Quarterly*.

Photo courtesy of Monica Brzezinski Potkay

About Your Coauthor

Monica Brzezinski Potkay

Monica Brzezinski Potkay is an associate professor of English at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, where she teaches Old and Middle English literature, the Bible and literature, and cultural studies. Her research interests include English and French literature, the influence of theological controversy and religious culture, the influence of classical texts, and the representation of gender and sexuality in literature.

Professor Potkay is coauthor (with Regula Meyer Evitt) of *Minding the Body: Women and Literature in the Middle Ages, 800–1500* (Twayne, 1997). Her published essays include "The Violence of Courtly Exegesis in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*" in *Representing Rape in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, edited by Christine Rose and Elizabeth Robertson (Palgrave, 2001); "Cleanness on the Question of Images" in *Viator* (26, 1995, pp. 181–193); and "The New Dark Ages of Camille Paglia" in *AEstel* (1, 1993).

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Introduction

This course provides a literary and historical overview of the Bible, from its opening in Genesis to its ending in the Book of Revelation, and also with a sense of some of the ways in which the Bible has influenced the literary traditions of the West. We'll be exploring key scenes, stories, forms, and books of the Bible through the methods of literary and cultural analysis. We'll be asking questions such as the following: What, in literary terms, might a biblical story mean? How does its form and style contribute to its meaning? How has the story been read by other readers, from influential theologians of the past (such as St. Augustine and John Calvin) through to literary critics of our own day? Finally, in what ways has the story had an impact on the literature, as well as the larger cultural life, of Europe and America? We pay particular attention to the ways in which the Bible has influenced the canon of English and American literature, including Shakespeare, Charlotte Brontë, and Robert Frost.

Course Objectives

- Provide a literary and historical overview of the Bible.
- Appreciate the human drama as well as the theological significance of key scenes, stories, and books of the Bible.
- Suggest some of the ways in which an understanding of the Bible may enhance an appreciation of literature. Literary examples and suggestions for further reading will be drawn chiefly from the canon of English and American literature.

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Lecture 1: Authorship and Style in the Torah

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is the Book of Genesis in the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible.

Introduction

When we first approach any book, we ask basic questions about the time and place of its composition. For the Torah—the first five books of the Bible—these questions are not easily answered. This lecture asks: Who wrote, or may have written, the Torah? It then addresses the challenge that biblical Hebrew poses to translators and briefly surveys English-language translations of the Bible.

Consider this . . .

1. Who wrote the different books of the Bible? Why were they written?
2. What time span is covered by the Torah? The Prophets? The New Testament?

Authorship and Style in the Torah

I. The Hebrew Bible

A. The Hebrew Bible contains twenty-four books, divided into thirty-nine in Christian Bibles.

B. The Hebrew Bible has three large divisions: the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings.

1. The Torah: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These books give a history of the world from its creation through Moses' final glimpse of the promised land. They also offer the Law.
2. The Prophets: These are further divided into former prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings) and latter prophets (Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and "The Book of the Twelve" [minor prophets], Hosea to Malachi).
3. The Writings: These include Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, and Daniel, as well as several other works. These books contain a variety of stories, poems, songs, and proverbs.

II. Who Wrote the First Five Books of the Bible (the Torah)? Moses?

A. The tradition of Mosaic authorship was first systematically questioned in the seventeenth century by Baruch Spinoza and other Enlightenment forerunners.

B. According to the Documentary Hypothesis, the Torah consists of a later editorial assemblage of four hypothetical sources.

1. The first is known as “J” (the Yahwist, who uses God’s personal name, Yahweh). The earliest of these sources is thought to provide most of the interesting stories of the Torah. These stories circulated among the Israelites until the tenth century, when the “J” author wrote them down.
2. The second, the “E” (the Elohist—refers to God as Elohim, the plural form of “divine powers”). This document often repeats stories of the “J” document. For example, in Genesis there are two accounts of Abraham passing his wife off as his sister (Genesis 12 and 20).
3. The third source is the “D” document (the author or authors of the book of Deuteronomy). Scholars think the book of law found in the Temple in 622 BCE is the source for this book.
4. Finally, there is the “P” document. The priestly authors compiled the earlier sources and added materials on religious ritual and law, genealogies and statistics. These documents date back to the Babylonian Exile.
    a. The “P” authors are thought to be responsible for references to ritual in Genesis and the rest of the Torah. For example, Genesis 2:3 establishes the Sabbath. Genesis 7 gives the first reference to clean and unclean animals, though this distinction has not yet been fully introduced. Chapter 17 of Genesis establishes the ritual of circumcision.

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What Happened to the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel?

After the death of Solomon, Israel was divided into opposing spheres. A northern kingdom called “Israel” (the north) became the home of ten tribes, and a southern kingdom called “Judah” (the south) became home to two. In 720 BCE, the northern tribes were overthrown and many re-settled in Mesopotamia. It has been suggested that the ten tribes “lost” their identity as Jews and were absorbed into the culture of the country to which they had been deported. Discovering the whereabouts of the Lost Tribes has excited the imaginations of writers and explorers for centuries, and different authors have argued that descendants of the Lost Tribes could be found among such diverse peoples as the Persians, Japanese, Chinese, British, and American Indians. Most modern scholars assume, however, that the ten tribes simply intermarried with the peoples of the Assyrian Empire and ultimately lost any Israelite identity or culture. More recently, though, because of the reliability of genetic testing, some scholars are taking seriously the claims of communities in Ethiopia, India, and China to be descended from the Lost Tribes.

b. The “P” document also provides the genealogies and statistics that occur in the Torah, which gave a sense of continuity to the Jewish people.

c. Finally, the “P” authors may have been responsible for compiling all of the older documents for inclusion in the Torah.

C. The most important sources in Genesis are the “J” and the “P” sources.

The “P” portions tend to be elevated and impersonal, concerned with cosmic order and religious ritual (e.g., Genesis 1–2:3).

3. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. (Genesis 1:3, KJV)

D. In Genesis, the “J” portions tend to be earthy and dramatic (e.g., Genesis 2:4–7). They feature multiple voices, including a serpent.

4. These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.

5. And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground.

6. But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.

7. And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. (Genesis 2:4–7, KJV)

III. How Has the Hebrew Bible Been Translated into English?

A. The King James Version (KJV), 1611, closely copies the “paratactic” form of the original. The New English Bible of the 1960s is the first to break, decisively, with the rhythms and familiar idiom of the KJV.

B. One example of the KJV’s enduring stylistic influence may be found in the paratactic prose of Ernest Hemingway, as well as in Hemingway’s studious avoidance of describing a character’s inner thoughts or feelings.

Summary

This lecture introduces the leading contemporary theory about the Torah’s composition, the “Documentary Hypothesis.” From the question of the Torah’s authorship we move into issues involved in its translation, noting that for Europe the Bible has chiefly been a book read in translation. For English-language speakers, the most historically important translation of the Bible has been the King James (or “Authorized”) Version, 1611. We see how the KJV achieves a high degree of formal correspondence to its Hebrew source through its distinctive “paratactic” style, a style borrowed in the twentieth century by the American writer Ernest Hemingway.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. What are the benefits and drawbacks of the King James Version translation of the Torah?
2. Do the different creation accounts of Genesis 1–2:3 and 2:4–25 seem compatible or not? Might they be seen as different perspectives on the same event, or do they seem more like separate accounts of different events?
3. The Documentary Hypothesis is one way of attempting to explain the differences in tone, and the narrative gaps and repetitions, between sections of Genesis. Can you imagine other possible explanations?

Other Books of Interest

Asimov, Isaac. *Asimov's Guide to the Bible*. 2 vols. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969.

Bloom, Harold, and David Rosenberg. *The Book of J*. New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990. (David Rosenberg's translations of the J portions of the Torah with Harold Bloom's interpretive commentary.)

Gabel, John B., Charles B. Wheeler, and Anthony D. York. *The Bible as Literature: An Introduction*. 4th ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Harris, Stephen L. *Understanding the Bible*. 3rd ed. Toronto: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1990.

Hauer, Christian E., and William A. Young. *An Introduction to the Bible: A Journey into Three Worlds*. 5th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001.

McGrath, Alister. *In the Beginning: The Story of the King James Bible and How It Changed a Nation, a Language, and a Culture*. New York: Anchor Books, 2001.

Websites to Visit

1. The Ernest Hemingway website has a complete listing of the author's works — www.ernest.hemingway.com
2. *Bible Places* is an exceptional resource site for maps, photographs, and other important information regarding the Holy Land — www.bibleplaces.com
3. The Biblical Archaeological Society website is a good resource for up-to-date happenings on archaeological findings — www.biblicalarchaeology.org

Lecture 2: Cain and Abel in Story, Theology, and Literary History

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Genesis 4 (Bible, KJV).

Introduction

This lecture treats the Cain and Abel story of Genesis 4 from three angles. First, we treat the story as a work of literature or myth, in terms of what it may have meant, historically, to its original author or audience. Second, we address two Christian theological interpretations of the story. Third and last, we look at several examples from English literary history of characters responding to the fear of being, like Cain in certain Christian readings, creatures predestined to damnation.

Consider this . . .

Might the story of Cain have been an allegory for the passing of the pastoral life?

I. The Cain and Abel Story on Its Own Terms: As a Work of Literature or Myth

As such, the story raises basic questions about character motivation: Why does Cain do what he does in the story? Why does Yahweh?

A. After "the Fall," the curse of Adam is to till the land, yet Cain, Eve's firstborn son, is the first tiller of the ground mentioned in the Bible.

B. Let's study the entire story of Cain and Abel.

C. Cain's offering proved unsatisfactory to Yahweh. There is no reason given, but Abel's offering is preferred.

3. And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.

4. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:

5. But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

6. And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? (Genesis 4:3–6, KJV)

D. Consider this as a human drama. Cain asks why his offering was not acceptable and Yahweh answers:

7. If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not

well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. (Genesis 4:7, KJV)

E. In the next passage comes the famous resolution of this sibling rivalry.

8. And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. (Genesis 4:8, KJV)

9. And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper? (Genesis 4:9, KJV)

F. This passage is particularly important because it shows Cain's independence.

G. At this point Cain is exiled by Yahweh to the Land of Nod and given a mark so that no one should kill him. (Yahweh doesn't specifically prohibit human bloodshed until the time of Noah [Genesis 9].) Cain becomes a nomad, or wanderer.

H. Now we move into a separate part of Genesis 4, where Cain is not a wanderer but a patriarch. Indeed, the founder of a city, Enoch, is named for his son.

I. This second half of Genesis 4 possesses several problems of narrative continuity. Many scholars believe the Cain story is one with different historical sources that has been inserted back into the Bible.

II. Christian Theological Readings of the Cain Figure

These come in two main varieties:

A. The "works" interpretation holds that a human has at least some control over his fate through his own freely chosen acts, or "works."

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Noah and the Flood

The story of Noah is told in Genesis 6–9. God warns Noah, the sole righteous human being, that because of human wickedness he will send a flood to destroy all of creation. He gives Noah specific instructions for building an ark that will preserve the lives of Noah, his family, and pairs of every kind of animal. Noah builds the ark, collects the animals, and boards along with his family. Rains begin that last for forty days, killing all creatures not aboard the ark but saving those within. Noah and his family leave the ark and thank God for their salvation. According to Genesis, God promises never again to destroy living creatures through flood: *"And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh"* (Genesis 9:15, KJV). He seals this covenant with a rainbow.

Could Cain have chosen to bring God a sin-offering and by this means become acceptable to God?

B. The "predestination" interpretation, by contrast—rooted in Paul (Romans 8:28–30) and St. Augustine, and developed by the sixteenth-century Protestant theologian John Calvin—holds that fallen mankind has no free will, and that God mysteriously chooses some individuals to receive divine grace and salvation (the elect), and conversely, some to remain in the sinful state in which all are born and so to be eternally damned (the reprobate). Is Cain among the reprobate, and Abel among the elect?

III. Predestination: A Disturbing Concept

Calvin's doctrine of double predestination (that some are predestined to election, some to reprobation) has caused perennial anxiety among certain writers and characters in the English literary canon, especially through the nineteenth century.

The problem is one of knowing or assurance: How can one know whether one is among the elect or among the reprobate? We may see this problem addressed in four literary sources:

A. John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (1674), 3.167–193.

1. In his classic epic on the fall of Adam and Eve, Milton believes in a type of predestination—the predestination of some to be elect without believing in the predestination of others to be reprobate.

Protestant Reformation and the Idea of Predestination

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Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, and other reformers are depicted in this illustration of a meeting known as the Marburg Colloquy in Germany, 1529.

By the sixteenth century, a number of Christians came to believe that the Church as it existed was corrupt in terms of both doctrine and structure. They sought to return it to the beliefs and practices of the Church as Christ founded it. This movement was called the Reformation. Originally the Reformers hoped to work within the Catholic Church, but eventually broke with it to found other churches. Reformation leaders included Martin Luther in Germany, Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin in Switzerland, and John Knox in Scotland. Luther's concept of justification by faith through grace, and not by works, sometimes led to a belief in predestination, the idea that God elects salvation for people without consideration of their actions. Predestination was especially embraced by John Calvin and his followers, who believed in "double predestination," that God chooses to save His elect and damn the rest of humanity.

2. To show his belief in this he puts these words in the voice of God in book 3 of *Paradise Lost*:

Some I have chosen of peculiar grace
Elect above the rest; so is my will:
The rest shall hear me call, and oft be warnd
Thir sinful state, and to appease betimes
Th' incensed Deitie, while offerd grace
Invites; for I will cleer thir senses dark,
What may suffice, and soft'n stonie hearts
To pray, repent, and bring obedience due.

~Book 3, ll. 183–190, *Paradise Lost*

3. Elsewhere in *Paradise Lost* Milton presents the entire debate between fate and predestination in a humorous but fruitless debate between devils in hell.

In thoughts more elevate, and reason'd high
Of Providence, Foreknowledge, Will, and Fate,
Fixt Fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,
And found no end, in wandring mazes lost.

~Book 2, ll. 558–561, *Paradise Lost*

B. Olaudah Equiano, *Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789).

How can one ever know if one is among the elect? This is Calvinist anxiety, which brought author Olaudah Equiano, a freed slave, to the brink of suicide. But in the end the author feels himself to be among the elect.

Olaudah Equiano

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Olaudah Equiano was probably born in 1745 in Essaka, a village located in Nigeria. He grew up in a family of considerable influence. At the age of ten, Equiano was kidnapped by slavers and transported to North America. He was bought and transferred a number of times. In 1757, he was purchased by British navy lieutenant Michael Henry Pascal, ending up as a servant, powder boy, and gunmate in the Royal Navy. On July 11, 1766, Equiano purchased his freedom, but continued to serve on a multitude of sea voyages. The adventurer even participated in Constantine Phipp's North Pole expedition in search of a northeast passage to India. He traveled widely and undertook successful business endeavors. Sometime in late 1774 or early 1775, Equiano experienced an evangelical Christian conversion. A dedicated humanitarian and abolitionist, Equiano published a number of letters, books, reviews, and finally, his autobiography, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself*, in 1789. Although Equiano died in 1797, his *Narrative* continued—and continues—to be published. It is an eloquent testimony to the horrors of slavery, the spirit of freedom, and the courage of faith.

. . . this scripture was instantaneously impressed on my mind "that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." (1 John 3:15) Then I paused, and thought myself the unhappiest man living. Again I was convinced that the Lord was better to me than I deserved, and I was better off in the world than many.

It pleased God to enable me to wrestle with him as Jacob did: I prayed that if sudden death were to happen, and I perished, it might be at Christ's feet.

In the evening of the same day, as I was reading and meditating on the fourth chapter of the Acts, twelfth verse, under the solemn apprehensions of eternity, and reflecting on my past actions, I began to think I had lived a moral life, and that I had proper ground to believe I had an interest in the divine favor; but still meditating on the subject, not knowing whether salvation was to be had partly for our own good deeds or solely as the sovereign gift from God. In this deep consternation the Lord was pleased to break in upon my soul with his bright beams of heavenly light; and in an instant, as it were, removing the veil, and letting the light into a dark place.

~Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, chapter 10

C. Lord Byron, *Cain: A Mystery* (1821), act 3, scene 1.

1. Byron's most famous creation is the Byronic hero, which is modeled on Cain. The Byronic hero feels himself to be damned but gives the damnation aristocratic airs.
2. In Byron's play, Cain is a proud hero defying a bloody God. He is also an agnostic and disapproves of the animal sacrifice given by Abel. Cain's anger leads him to an unpremeditated act, that of murdering his brother. This introduces death into the world. Cain moves on to become the wandering Byronic hero.
3. The Byronic hero also reappears in the characters of Mr. Rochester in *Jane Eyre*, Heathcliff in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights,* and Ahab in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*.

Summary

We have seen the story of Cain pass from its context in Genesis, where both Cain's and God's motives appear obscure, to an Augustinian and a fortiori Calvinist interpretation of Cain as a reprobate, slated by God for worldliness and damnation. Calvin's doctrine of predestination infects much English literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with fears about personal damnation. Lord Byron is the first author to turn Cain into a heroic rebel and outcast, a prototype for the artist-hero in the age of Romanticism.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Using the Documentary Hypothesis, how might you account for the problems of narrative continuity found in Genesis 4 (e.g., the presence of many people on the earth aside from Adam's family)? How else might you account for these apparent narrative problems?
2. What is the difference between a predestinarian and "a works" interpretation of the Cain story?
3. Beyond Byron's Cain, can you think of other nineteenth- or twentieth-century works of art (literature, music, painting, film) that feature figures who, like Cain, serve as noble criminals and romantic outcasts or outsiders?

Other Books of Interest

Alter, Robert. *Genesis: Translation and Commentary*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1996.

Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre.* Norton Critical Edition. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2000.

Brontë, Emily. *Wuthering Heights.* Norton Critical Edition. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1990.

D'Olivet, Fabre, and Nayan L. Redfield. *Cain: A Dramatic Mystery in Three Acts by Lord Byron*. New York: Kessinger Publishing Company, 1995.

Melville, Herman. *Moby Dick: Or, The Whale*. New York: Bantam, 1981.

Milton, John. *Paradise Lost*. New York: Penguin, 2000.

Potkay, Adam, and Sandra Burr, eds. *Black Atlantic Writers of the Eighteenth Century: Living the New Exodus in England and the Americas*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995.

Recorded Books

Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Narrated by Flo Gibson. UNABRIDGED. Recorded Books. 12 cassettes/17.5 hours or 16 CDs/17.5 hours.

Brontë, Emily. *Wuthering Heights*. Narrated by Flo Gibson. UNABRIDGED. Recorded Books. 8 cassettes/11 hours or 8 CDs/11 hours.

Melville, Herman. *Moby Dick*. Narrated by Frank Muller. UNABRIDGED. Recorded Books. 15 cassettes/21 hours or 18 CDs/21 hours.

Lecture 3: Icons and Iconoclasm: From Moses to Milton

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Exodus 1–34 (Bible, KJV).

Introduction

Does God's second commandment to Moses prohibit all images, or at least all religious images? This lecture explores different answers to this question, one crucial to both Western religion and the arts.

Consider this . . .

What is the symbolism in making the Israelites drink the water strewn with the ashes of the golden calf?

I. Ambiguities in the Hebrew Bible About Whether or Not Image-Making Is Acceptable

A. In Exodus 20, God categorically forbids the making of "any Graven Image."

1. *And God spake all these words, saying,*
2. *I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*
3. *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*
4. *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.*
5. *Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God.* (Exodus 20:1–5, KJV)

B. Why this prohibition? There is a threat that people may idolize images when they are created. What is an idol? Technically, an idol is a material object that possesses power because a god lives in it. In a more general sense, an idol is anything that stands between man and a transcendent God.

C. Compare Exodus 20 with the later passage Exodus 20:23.

23. *Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold.* (Exodus 20:23, KJV)

In this chapter God tells Israel not even to make an image of Him. God generally insists on his invisibility, which makes him unique among the gods of the time. God also makes of Israel a nation of iconoclasts, that is, image-breakers. (Exodus 23:23–24)

D. It is important to note that while Moses is on Mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments, the Israelites are doing just what God has forbidden—making an idol. The Israelites break both God's first and second commandments.

3. And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.

4. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. (Exodus 32:3–4, KJV)

E. Moses comes down from the mountain with the Ten Commandments.

19. And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount. (Exodus 32:19, KJV)

Moses breaks the tablets to signify Israel's breaking of the covenant with Yahweh.

20. [Moses] took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it. (Exodus 32:20, KJV)

The Mysteries of the Ark of the Covenant

Of all Israel's holy objects, the most sacred was the Ark of the Covenant, an elaborately decorated chest that represented the presence of God. Exodus 25: 10–22 provides God's instructions to Moses for building the Ark: it was made of *shittim,* or acacia wood, lined inside and out with gold, had a golden "crown" or rim around the top, and four rings for carrying poles. On top of the Ark sat the "Mercy Seat," a space that functioned as God's oracle and that was guarded by two "cherubim," or winged creatures. The Ark contained the Tablets of the Law given by God to Moses at Mount Sinai (Exod. 40:18), a vessel containing manna (Exod. 16:34), and Aaron's blossoming staff (Num. 17:10).

The Ark disappeared during the Babylonian assault on Jerusalem in 587 BCE. Various traditions exist regarding its whereabouts. Second Maccabees 2 reports that Jeremiah, forewarned by God, hid the Ark in a cave on a mountain where Moses received a divine vision; some now believe that this means that the Ark is hidden on Mt. Nebo. The Talmud contains a different story that the Ark was hidden by King Josiah in a secret place prepared by Solomon in case of danger, so others believe the Ark is hidden on the Temple Mount or near the Dead Sea. Because the Crusaders brought many European visitors to the Holy Land, yet other writers believe that the Ark was discovered by the Knights Templar and may in fact be the real Holy Grail. Ethiopian Christians claim they possess the Ark at Aksum; legend says it was brought there by a son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Still other theories about the fate of the Ark are no stranger and no less fascinating than the story told about it in the film *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

Thus Moses becomes the first Iconoclast. Moses then returns to Mount Sinai and God reinscribes the Ten Commandments.

F. However, in Exodus 25, God instructs Moses to adorn the Ark of the Covenant with images of cherubim (fearsome heavenly beings).

> *17. And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof.*
>
> *18. And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat.*
>
> *19. And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof.* (Exodus 25:17–19, KJV)

G. These cherubim were also placed at the gates of Eden when Adam and Eve were banished. They are fearsome creatures. Some scholars believe these may be winged lions or bulls.

H. There are other apparent discrepancies in Yahweh's orders. In Numbers 21, Yahweh instructs Moses to create a serpent staff to cure those who have been bitten by snakes. In 2 Kings that staff is broken because people are beginning to worship it.

II. The Medieval Church Defended the Proper Use of Images Within Church Architecture

A. Medieval theologians argued that Christ himself is an incarnation of God, thereby giving an image of Him and sanctifying the proper use of images.

Cathedrals: "Books for the Unlearned"
Notre Dame de Paris and de Chartres

© PhotoDisc
Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris

Two cathedrals, dedicated to the Virgin Mary under the title of "Notre Dame," or "Our Lady," one at Paris and the other at Chartres (a town southwest of Paris), offer excellent examples of how medieval art functioned as a tool to teach the laity about biblical narratives and religious beliefs. Notre Dame de Paris was built between 1163 and 1250, Chartres between 1194 and 1260. Both cathedrals are exquisite examples of French Gothic architecture, a style whose soaring pointed arches, lofty ribbed vaults, and towering spires were intended to lead the eye—and the mind—upwards to the divine realm. Much of the interior of Notre Dame de Paris was defaced or destroyed before and during the French Revolution, but one may still admire the stained-glass rose window, carved guardian gargoyles, and flying buttresses; a significant number of carvings were restored in the nineteenth century. Chartres is better preserved, boasting both a large collection of the original stained-glass windows and carvings on the exterior porches executed during the twelfth century.

B. The abuse of images is "idolatry," or worshipping the image as an idol. Proper use of the image is seeing the image as a sign that points to God.

C. Pope Gregory the Great (ca. 540–604) called images the "books of the unlearned" (books for the illiterate). For example, a painting of the last judgment will inspire fear of that event.

D. Images, it was maintained, should lead us to worship the invisible (God).

III. According to John Calvin and Calvinistic "Puritan" groups in seventeenth-century Britain and America, churches should not contain images—stained glass, statuary, or paintings.

A. Many Protestant reformers believed that people eventually come to worship the images themselves, not God. The term "Puritan" originally referred to one who wanted to restore the Church to its primitive purity.

B. During the Puritan Revolution and Commonwealth in England—1642 to 1660—church art was destroyed on a massive scale. In 1643 Parliament passed legislation that all artwork in churches should be destroyed.

C. The Puritan iconoclast rallying cry, "Down with Dagon!," alludes to the story in 1 Samuel 5 about how the Ark of the Covenant (which contains the Ten Commandments), when placed in the Philistine temple of Dagon, brought down the statue of this pagan god.

> *4. And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold; only the stump of Dagon was left to him.* (1 Samuel 5:4, KJV)

D. The poet John Milton echoes these themes. In fact, Milton supported the Puritan Revolution. In book one of *Paradise Lost* the devil Dagon is described as *"one / Who mourn'd in earnest, when the Captive Ark / Maim'd his brute Image."*

IV. The Effect of Puritan Distrust of Artifice and Visual Imagery on the Course of English Poetry

Here, we look briefly at passages from Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queen* (1590), 2.12.83, and William Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" (1798).

A. In *The Faerie Queen*, book 2, we meet Sir Guyon, who represents temperance. This character finds himself in a paradise called the "Bower of Bliss." This bower is a construction of seemingly great beauty, but without natural leaf or flower. It has the taint of a graven image. Being an iconoclast, Sir Guyon tears the bower apart:

But all those pleasant bowres and Pallace brave,
Guyon broke downe, with rigor pittilesse;
Ne ought their goodly workmanship might save
Them from the tempest of his wrathfulnesse,
But that their blisse he turn'd to balefulnesse:
Their groves he feld, their gardins did deface,
Their arbers spoyle, their Cabinets suppresse,

Their banket houses burne, their buildings race,
And of the fairest late, now made the fowlest place.

~The Second Book of *The Faerie Queene*, #83

B. The final literary example concerns William Wordsworth. For Wordsworth the imaginative is that which is unimaged. It seems the Hebrews, he believed, preserved the imagination through their abhorrence of idolatry. In *Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour, July 13, 1798*, Wordsworth writes an intensely anti-imagistic poem:

These beauteous forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
And passing even into my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration:—feelings too
Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,
As have no slight or trivial influence
On that best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremembered, acts
Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened:—that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,—
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

Summary

The ambiguous attitude toward images in the Hebrew Bible, combined with the central Christian event of the Incarnation, allowed medieval Christian theologians to work out an elaborate defense of images as the "books of the unlearned" and as signs pointing toward God. Seventeenth-century English Puritans, by contrast, proved themselves active iconoclasts, breaking down church art and architecture in England, and also fostering a literary style, realized most fully in John Milton and William Wordsworth, that is anti-imagistic, or opposed to poetic appeals to the eye.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. What makes the Hebrew Bible's attitude toward images ambiguous?
2. In Exodus 33:11, Moses speaks to God "face to face," but in verse 20, God says to Moses: "Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me, and live." Why do you think the Torah editors allowed this apparent contradiction? And what does it say about the larger theme in Exodus of divine visibility or invisibility?
3. We've discussed Milton's and Wordsworth's verse as largely anti-imagistic. What works of poetry or prose fiction do you know that are, by contrast, visual or image-laden? Which mode seems closer to the prose you find in Genesis and Exodus?

Other Books of Interest

Hillerbrand, Hans J. *The Protestant Reformation*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1990.

Milton, John. *Paradise Lost*. New York: Penguin, 2000.

Spenser, Edmund. *The Faerie Queene*. Ed. Thomas P. Roche. New York: Penguin, 1988.

Wordsworth, William. *The Major Works*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Websites to Visit

1. *Poet's Corner* website has much of the poetry cited in this course — www.theotherpages.org/poems
2. The University of Oregon website *Renascence Editions* provides the complete text of *The Faerie Queene* — http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~rbear/fqintro.html
3. *Bartleby* website features the complete text to *Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour, July 13, 1798* — http://www.bartleby.com/145/ww138.html

Lecture 4: The Story of King David, or the Varieties of Love

The Suggested Readings for this lecture are Samuel (complete); 2 Samuel 5–7, 11–18; 1 Kings 3, 5–6, 10–11, 16:29–19 (Bible, KJV), and "Historical Chronology of Israel" on page 101 of this course guide.

Introduction

The story of 1–2 Samuel, involving David's powerful kingdom and God's promise that the throne would forever belong to his lineage, represents the highpoint of Jewish history in the Bible. The story of David is also a story about the power and varieties of love: God's love for David; David and Jonathan's loyal love for each other; David's adulterous and murderous love for Bathsheba; and finally David's paternal love for his rebellious son, Absalom.

Consider this . . .

What is the role of the prophet in the story of David? Where else in literature do we see other characters acting out this role?

King David: A Political Being

We now jump ahead to 1000 BCE. David is a native of Bethlehem and an ancestor of Jesus.

A. David becomes King.

David, a plucky and heroic figure, is chosen by God to be king over all Israel and the father of future kings "forever."

1. David comes to rule over a dual kingdom of Israel (containing the Israelite tribes north of the Dead Sea) and Judah (the southernmost Israelite territory, between the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean Sea).
2. He was a Judean, part of the poorest of the tribes and one that remained closest both geographically and spiritually to the Israelites' ancient desert ways. Thus, it was surprising that David would be chosen to rule.
3. David is anointed by Samuel during the rule of King Saul (1 Samuel 16). David never questions Saul's rule, however, and is welcomed as a loyal member of Saul's court (1 Samuel 17).
4. At the end of the first book of Samuel, the Israelites are routed by the Philistines, Samuel is dead, Saul commits suicide, and Saul's son Jonathan has been killed in battle.

B. David and Jonathan share a brotherly love for each other.

1. Jonathan was David's friend. He had frequently saved David's life when Saul plotted to kill him.
2. In the beginning of 2 Samuel, David learns of Jonathan's death and we see David's moving lament in 2 Samuel 1:26.

    26. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. (2 Samuel 1:26, KJV)

3. David is now anointed king for a second time. He conquers Jerusalem, which had not previously been occupied by the Israelites.

    7. Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David. (2 Samuel 5:7, KJV)

4. David built his palace in Jerusalem. Solomon, David's son, later built the Temple on Mount Zion.

The Kingdom of David and Solomon

David's United Kingdom of Israel, including the southern kingdom of Judah (two tribes) and the northern kingdom of Israel (ten tribes), lasted from about 1010 to 970 BCE, through his reign and the reign of his son, Solomon. David made Jerusalem the capital and it became a symbol of God's promise to David that his kingdom would (symbolically) last forever. Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem during his reign.

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5. Yahweh makes a promise to David.

> *16. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.* (2 Samuel 7:16, KJV)

And of Solomon, Yahweh says,

> *14. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men.* (2 Samuel 7:14, KJV)

This is the first time God has declared love in the Hebrew Bible, this time a father's love for his son.

C. David as a man and God's love for him.

1. David's adulterous and murderous love for Bathsheba.

David, however, is also one of the Bible's most recognizably human characters, whom we see as a domestic being, a man at home—given to passions and desires, rash actions and repentance.

a. David sees Bathsheba bathing and falls in love with her.

> *2. And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.*
>
> *3. And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?*
>
> *4. And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house.*
>
> *5. And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child.*
>
> *6. And David sent to Joab, saying, Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David.*
>
> *7. And when Uriah was come unto him, David demanded of him how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered.*
>
> *8. And David said to Uriah, Go down to thy house, and wash thy feet. And Uriah departed out of the king's house, and there followed him a mess of meat from the king.*
>
> *9. But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and went not down to his house.*
>
> *10. And when they had told David, saying, Uriah went not down unto his house, David said unto Uriah, Camest thou not from thy journey? why then didst thou not go down unto thine house?*
>
> *11. And Uriah said unto David, the ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife?* (2 Samuel 11:2–11, KJV)

b. Then later David gets Uriah drunk to try again.

13. And when David had called him, he did eat and drink before him; and he made him drunk: and at evening he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but went not down to his house.

14. And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah.

15. And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die.

16. And it came to pass, when Joab observed the city, that he assigned Uriah unto a place where he knew that valiant men were.

17. And the men of the city went out, and fought with Joab: and there fell some of the people of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also. (2 Samuel 11:13–17, KJV)

c. David has Uriah the Hittite essentially executed, and is upbraided for this by Nathan the Prophet (2 Samuel 12):

7. And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;

The Story of David and Goliath

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The biblical story of David and Goliath is told in 1 Samuel 17. The Philistines and Israelites were gathered for war. Goliath, the huge—over nine feet tall—Philistine champion, taunted the Israelite army under Saul for forty days. Saul and the Israelites were terrified. David, a young shepherd, showed up at the battlefield at the right time, bringing food to his brothers. David rose to the occasion and volunteered to confront Goliath. Armed with only his staff, pouch, sling, and five smooth stones, David killed Goliath. David gave his god credit for the victory.

49. And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth.

50. So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David.

51. Therefore David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled. (1 Samuel 17:49–51)

8. *And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.*
9. *Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.*
10. *Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.*
11. *Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbor, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun.*
12. *For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.* (2 Samuel 12:7–12, KJV)

d. Nathan the Prophet berates David for his crime, telling him of God's love for him but also God's displeasure and projected punishment: the death of his first child with Bathsheba, and the rebellion of David's beloved older son, Absalom.

2. David's paternal love for his son.

a. Absalom publicly rebels against his father and then trumps what his father did in private (having sex with Bathsheba) by having sex with all of his father's wives in public.

b. David is forced to flee from Jerusalem. There is a moving scene where David ascends Mount Olivet:

Bathsheba

Rembrandt's Bathsheba, painted in 1654 and now in the Louvre Museum, Paris, is perhaps the most beautiful nude of the Baroque period. Using as his model Hendrickje Stoffels, the woman with whom he lived, Rembrandt depicts Bathsheba in deep, wistful thought. She holds David's letter in her hand, and seems preoccupied with its unusual message, summoning her to the king's house. (2 Samuel 11:3–4)

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The Toilet of Bathsheba
by Rembrandt

30. And David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.

31. And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness. (2 Samuel 15:30–31, KJV)

c. Absalom listens to the advice of Hushai, David's double agent, instead of the wise counsel of Achitophel.

d. Absalom's delay in following his father allows David to triumph over his son. David's commander Joab kills Absalom on the field of battle.

e. The story of Absalom's rebellion has captured the imagination of many writers. The seventeenth-century poet John Dryden wrote a famous poem entitled *Absalom and Achitophel* that allegorizes political events of the reign of Charles the Second. The tale also inspired William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*

f. Literarily, David's lament for Absalom is equalled in its elegance only by King Lear's lament for his daughter Cordelia in Shakespeare's *King Lear*. To quote Lear, *"Thou wilt come no more . . . never, never, never, never, never."*

g. In 2 Samuel 18 we see David's lament. You will note here two important literary devices often used in biblical narrative. First, the element of suspense. Second, the periphrasis, or a roundabout way of saying things, found in Cushi's reply to David in verse 32.

h. From 2 Samuel 18:

24. And David sat between the two gates: and the watchman went up to the roof over the gate unto the wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked, and beheld a man running alone.

25. And the watchman cried, and told the king. And the king said, If he be alone, there are tidings in his mouth. And he came apace, and drew near.

26. And the watchman saw another man running: and the watchman called unto the porter, and said, Behold another man running alone. And the king said, He also bringeth tidings.

27. And the watchman said, Me thinketh the running of the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok. And the king said, He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings.

28. And Ahimaaz called, and said unto the king, All is well. And he fell down to the earth upon his face before the king, and said, Blessed be the LORD thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king.

29. And the king said, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Ahimaaz answered, When Joab sent the king's servant, and me thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was.

30. And the king said unto him, Turn aside, and stand here. And he turned aside, and stood still.

31. And, behold, Cushi came; and Cushi said, Tidings, my lord the king: for the LORD hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee.

32. And the king said unto Cushi, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Cushi answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is.

33. And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son! (2 Samuel 18:24–33, KJV)

Summary

We last see David lamenting the death of his beloved but rebellious son, Absalom; David's love for Absalom is akin to God's unconditional love for David, to whom and through whose sons he gives the kingship of Israel perpetually. The scene in which David receives the news of Absalom's death is brilliantly designed for dramatic effect through the narrator's use of suspense, periphrasis, and repetition.

William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*

Absalom, Absalom! (1936) defies summary because of its epic sweep and nonlinear plot. Covering a century of Southern history and culture before and after the Civil War, the novel is structured as a series of interlocking stories told by multiple narrators. But within this thematic and stylistic complexity lies a comparatively simple core narrative, a tale of dynastic hopes and ruin.

Faulkner himself described the novel as "the story of a man who wanted a son through pride, and got too many of them and they destroyed him." That man is Thomas Sutpen, who rises from poor Appalachian youth to wealthy plantation owner. Sutpen hopes to perpetuate his wealth and power by begetting a son and heir, but his couplings with a series of wives and mistresses white, black, and of mixed race, produce only tragedy born of greed, slavery, and racism: Thomas Sutpen's only white son, Henry, kills his friend Charles Bon to prevent his marriage to Henry's sister, Judith, when he discovers Charles to be his mulatto half-brother.

Faulkner modeled his story of incest, fratricide, and defeated dynastic hopes on the story of King David and his rebellious yet beloved son Absalom in 2 Samuel 13–18. There Absalom kills his half-brother Amnon in revenge for the rape of Absalom's sister Tamar. This rape and killing are just the beginning of a chain of sorrowful events that include Absalom's war against his father and culminate in David's despairing lament over the dead Absalom, a lament that provided Faulkner's title: "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son! (2 Samuel 18:32–33)

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Distinguish the different kinds of love found in the David story. Does the story imply what the best type of love is?
2. Why is a character in a state of agitation or excitement prone to repeat certain words or phrases?

Other Books of Interest

Alter, Robert. *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1999.

Damrosch, David. *The Narrative Covenant: Transformations of Genre in the Growth of Biblical Literature*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987.

Faulkner, William. *Absalom, Absalom!* New York: Vintage Books, 1991.

Kirsch, Jonathan. *King David: The Real Life of the Man Who Ruled Israel*. New York: Ballantine Books, Inc., 2000.

Websites to Visit

1. The *Jewish Virtual Library* provides maps and other historical information on Jerusalem, including the temples built by Solomon — www.us-israel.org
2. The official website of the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs — www.israel-mfa.gov.il
3. *Solomon's Temple* features historical and scholarly information on the Temple, including computer models — www.solomonstemple.com
4. *The Jerusalem Post* is an excellent resource for articles on present day and historical Jerusalem, including the Temple of David's period — www.jpost.com
5. *Poets' Corner* provides the complete text to John Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* — www.theotherpages.org/poems/dryden03.html

Lecture 5: The Song of Solomon: The Poetry of Sacred and Profane Love

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is the Song of Solomon, Song of Songs (Bible, KJV).

Introduction

Here we examine how the Song of Solomon uses metaphor to describe erotic love between a man and a woman. In remarkable poetry, this book depicts love as mutual, physical, and all-consuming. The Song of Solomon understandably came to furnish an ideal model for love poetry. More surprisingly, it also provided a model for devotional poetry, as it was interpreted as the marriage song between God and Israel, the Church, or the individual human soul.

Consider this . . .

1. What other literature makes use of the blazon?
2. Who do you think wrote the Song of Songs? Why?
3. Why is such an erotic poem included in such a sacred book?

I. Erotic Love in the Song of Solomon

Erotic love is mutual, all-consuming, and described through the Bride and Bridegroom's praise of each other's beauty. These encomia provide a model for erotic poetry.

A. The Song of Solomon furnishes elements of the spring *topos,* a set description of the coming of spring that marks spring as a time for love.

1. Spring is a time for renewal, as we see in the Song of Solomon:

11. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;

12. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land;

13. The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. (Song of Solomon 2:11–13, KJV)

B. It also provides various examples of the blazon: a set description of the beloved wherein each part of her body is described through a different metaphor.

1. Most of the blazons in the Song of Solomon are floral, comparing the Bride to a garden:

12. A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.

13. *Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard,*

14. *Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices:*

15. *A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.*

16. *Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.* (Song of Solomon 4:12–16, KJV)

2. Now, we'll look briefly at how Edmund Spenser adapts the floral blazon in his *Amoretti* #64:

Coming to kiss her lips, (such grace I found)
Me seemed I smelled a garden of sweet flowers,
That dainty odors from them threw around
For damsels fit to deck their lovers' bowers.
Her lips did smell like unto Gillyflowers,
Her ruddy cheeks like unto Roses red:
Her snowy brows like budded Bellamores,
Her lovely eyes like Pinks but newly spread.
Her goodly bosom like a strawberry bed,
Her neck like to a bunch of Columbines:
Her breast like Lillies, ere their leaves be shed,
Her nipples like young blossomed Jasmines.
Such fragrant flowers do give most odorous smell,
But her sweet odor did them all excel.

~Edmund Spenser, *Amoretti* #64

3. The Song of Solomon contains a more unusual architectural blazon, wherein the Bride's features are compared to parts of a building; we'll compare the Song's architectural blazon to that in Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* #9.

From the Song of Solomon:

4. *Thy neck is as a tower of ivory; thine eyes like the fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bathrabbim: thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus.* (Song of Solomon 7:4, KJV)

These lines find some echo in Elizabethan poetry. From Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* #9:

The door by which sometimes comes forth her Grace
Red porphir is, which lock of pearl makes sure,
Whose porches rich (which name of cheeks endure)
Marble mix'd red and white do interlace.

~Sir Philip Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella* #9

II. The Song of Solomon in the Biblical Canon

Including the Song of Solomon as part of the biblical canon raised the

question of whether it contained religious doctrine or sentiments. Most religious interpretations of the Song of Solomon read the sexual love described in the text allegorically, as a figure for God's love for humankind.

A. Jewish tradition views the Song of Solomon as the love song celebrating the marriage covenant between God and Israel.

> 5. *Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine.* (Exodus 19:5, KJV)

Many portions of the Bible, even in the Old Testament, refer to God's relationship with his people as a marriage. In Isaiah 62:4–5:

> 4. *Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.*
>
> 5. *For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.* (Isaiah 62:4–5, KJV)

The prophets often refer to the Israelites as adulterous wives when they break their covenant with God.

B. Christians read the Song as an allegory of Jesus' love for the Church, as seen in Paul's letter to the Ephesians:

> 22. *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.*
>
> 23. *For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.*
>
> 24. *Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.*
>
> 25. *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it* (Ephesians 5:22–25, KJV)

C. Christians also read the Song as as allegory celebrating the human soul's marriage to God.

1. We see this spiritual allegory coloring the spirituality of Margery Kempe in her *Booke*. Margery Kempe took quite literally the idea of marrying Jesus, even wearing a wedding ring. She practiced marital mysticism despite having fourteen children.

2. The spiritual mysticism of St. Teresa of Avila is regarded as genuine. She wrote an autobiography describing her spiritual ecstacy. The eroticism of her text suggests many questions about the relationship between love, spiritual and physical. In Richard Crashaw's poem about St. Teresa of Avila, *The Flaming Heart*, we also see the difficulties of a man writing as a woman describing religious mysticism. Many of his verses ultimately allude to the Song of Songs, including an allusion to two verses in chapter eight, which many regard as the climax of the book:

6. *Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.* (Song of Solomon 8:6, KJV)

3. Crashaw longs to feel these emotions but realizes he must "become" a woman to do so. Crashaw ends the poem with a prayer to Teresa to destroy his male identity so he can take on her womanliness. *He says, "Leave nothing of myself in me. Let me so read thy life that I unto all life of mine might die . . ."*

III. The Song of Solomon as a Metaphor for Spiritual Love

While traditions often interpret the erotic love of the Song of Solomon as a metaphor for spiritual love, many writers have viewed the corporeal love celebrated by the Song as utterly different from divine love. They raise the question, "Can erotic love function as a metaphor for divine love?"

A. The question is raised in John Donne's *Holy Sonnet* #14, "Batter My Heart":

Batter my heart, three person'd God; for, you
As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to mend,
That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow mee, and bend
Your force, to breake, blowe, burn and make me new.
I, like an usurpt towne, to another due,
Labour to admit you, but Oh, to no end,
Reason your viceroy in mee, mee should defend,
But is captiv'd, and proves weake or untrue.

John Donne: "Batter My Heart"

John Donne (1572–1631) was born into a staunchly Catholic family, but converted to the Church of England. Ordained a priest, he served as dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London, where he was known for his eloquently devout sermons. He wrote poems throughout his life, but most were not published until after his death.

Donne is sometimes called a "Metaphysical poet," a term coined by Samuel Johnson. According to Johnson, the Metaphysicals were distinguished by the bizarreness of their metaphors: with a "combination of dissimilar images" they linked "heterogeneous ideas" together "by violence" (*Lives of the Poets,* "Cowley"). The violence of Donne's imagination is on spectacular display in his Holy Sonnet #14, "Batter My Heart." Here the speaker describes his spiritual state—helplessly bound to sin but desiring union with God—with images drawn from the book of Revelation. Donne is the city of Jerusalem of Rev. 21, although captured by God's enemies, and also the laboring woman of Rev. 12, albeit wed to God's rival. Since Revelation describes God's vanquishing of evil as a military victory, Donne's city must be broken, his female self "ravish[ed]" if he will ever be saved. While the metaphors for God's merciful saving action seem cruel, even barbaric, they testify to the paradoxical nature of God who is both One and Donne's "three person'd God," and who in Revelation builds "a new heaven and a new earth" only after destroying the old. Like creation itself, Donne must be broken to be reborn.

Yet dearely I love you, and would be loved faine,
But am betroth'd unto your enemie:
Divorce mee, untie, or breake that knot againe,
Take mee to you, imprison mee, for I
Except you enthrall mee, never shall be free,
Nor ever chast, except you ravish mee.

~John Donne, *Holy Sonnet* #14

We see that all love is not the same. Married love, indeed all human love, is not perfect. None of their vices can mar divine love.

B. Umberto Eco's novel *The Name of the Rose* provides an interesting discussion on whether human eros can function as a metaphor for divine love. One of the works it examines is the Song of Songs. Eco's characters invoke both the religious and erotic meaning of the Song.

1. Ubertino de Casale views Mary as the model of immaculate grace. "In her even the body's grace is a sign of the beauties of heaven."
2. In another character, Adso of Melk, Eco introduces a man with no words for love but those he borrows from the Song of Songs. Adso addresses his first lover for pages using words from the Bible, saying, "And she kissed me with the kisses of her mouth and her loves were more delicious than wine, and her ointments had a goodly fragrance, and her neck was beautiful among pearls and her cheek among earrings. Behold thou ar't fair my beloved. Behold thou ar't fair." Adso acknowledges that he is using sacred text for an earthly purpose. He is combining earthly passion with spiritual mysticism.
3. Ubertino is adamant that Adso come to distinguish the two. He says, "you must learn to distinguish the fire of supernatural love from the raving of the senses." But Adso asks, "Was there truly a difference between the delights of which the saints had spoken and those which my adjutated spirit was feeling at that moment? At that moment the watchful sense of difference was annihilated in me." Adso feels, simply, that love is love. Later, in a cooler moment, Adso feels that the two kinds of ecstasies are at once the same and different. He concludes, "This it seems is the teaching left us by Saint Thomas. The more openly it remains a figure of speech, the more it is a dissimilar similitude and not literal, the more a metaphor reveals its truth."

Summary

Here we've seen how the Song of Solomon has always been revered for its high level of poetic achievement. Furnishing an ideal model of poetry, it understandably was imitated by later poets, who borrowed especially the spring topos and the blazon of the beloved as conventions in love poetry. Because of its inclusion in the Hebrew Bible, the Song was also widely understood to possess religious significance as the love song between God and Israel. Christian readers similarly read the Song as an allegory about the love between God and the corporate Church or the individual human soul, and so this book also furnished a model for religious poetry.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. What are the poetic conventions that English-language love poets drew from the Song of Songs?
2. How could these conventions be adapted for religious devotional poetry?
3. What's problematic about using sexual love as a metaphor for love between God and humanity? Might the passionate love described in the Song of Songs work as a distraction from spiritual thoughts?

Other Books of Interest

Abrams, M.H., et al. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 2 vols. 7th ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001.

Atwan, Robert, and Laurence Wieder, eds. *Chapters into Verse: Poetry Inspired by the Bible*. 2 vols. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Bloch, Ariel, and Chana Bloch. *The Song of Songs: A New Verse Translation with an Introduction and Commentary*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

Eco, Umberto. *The Name of the Rose*. Trans. William Weaver. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994.

Kempe, Margery. *The Book of Margery Kempe*. Trans. Barry Windeatt. New York: Penguin Classics, 1988.

St. Teresa of Avila. *The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila by Herself*. New York: Penguin Classics, 1988.

Websites to Visit

The Other Pages website by Stephen L. Spanoudis provides the texts to Spenser's *Amoretti #64* —
www.theotherpages.org/poems/spenser3.html

Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella #9* —
www.theotherpages.org/poems/sidney01.html

Crashaw's *The Flaming Heart Upon the Book and Picture of St. Teresa* —
www.theotherpages.org/poems/crashaw1.html#3

Lecture 6: Psalms: The Poetry of Praise and Supplication

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Psalms (Bible, KJV).

Introduction

In this lecture we focus on the Book of Psalms, which contains 150 devotional poems, intended to be chanted or sung utilizing a stringed instrument as in Psalm 33: "Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. Sing unto him a new song; play skillfully with a loud noise." (Psalm 33:2–3, KJV)

Consider this . . .

1. What is the relationship between the psalms and hymns sung in churches today?
2. Why did the psalms' musical accompaniment not receive a written legacy?

I. Who wrote the Psalms?

Tradition attributes many of them to David, a skilled harp player, but note that the caption "a psalm of David" can mean either "a psalm composed by David" or "a psalm about or concerning David."

A. Several are considered post-exilic psalms dating back to the sixth century BCE, such as the 137th psalm:

> *1. By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.* (Psalm 137:1, KJV)

B. Seven psalms in particular are attributed to David as he repents of his treacherous adultery with Bathsheba. These "Penitential Psalms" are numbers 6, 32, 51, 102, 130, and 143. This is from Psalm 102:

> *1. Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee.*
>
> *2. Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call answer me speedily.*
>
> *3. For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth.* (Psalm 102:1–3, KJV)
>
> . . .
>
> *8. Mine enemies reproach me all the day; and they that are mad against me are sworn against me.*

9. *For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping.*

10. *Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.*

11. *My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass.*

12. *But thou, O LORD, shall endure for ever; and thy remembrance unto all generations.* (Psalm 102: 8–12, KJV)

II. Psalms of Praise and Psalms of Supplication

A. Psalms of praise extol the Lord's greatness. Psalm 33, which we quoted in the introduction to this lecture, is one example of this. Another example is Psalm 148: *Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights.* (Psalm 148:1, KJV)

B. These typically open with an invitation to praise God, or to sing, or rejoice. Or there are those that express thanksgiving. For example, Psalm 103:

1. *Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.*

2. *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:*

3. *Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;*

4. *Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies.* (Psalm 103:1–4, KJV)

Man playing a shofar

Musical Instruments in the Bible

The most frequently mentioned instrument is the shofar, or horn. According to the Mishna, there were two types, one made from the horn of a ram and a second, larger one from that of an antelope. The horn originated, according to Genesis, with Jubal, and was used in a primarily military context (see, for example, Numbers 10:9, Nehemiah 4:20). It took on ceremonial uses that continue down to the present day in some synagogues, being sounded on the holy days of Rosh Hoshana and Yom Kippur.

The lyre is closely associated with David and the Psalms. Although similar, and sometimes interchangeably translated, the lyre and the harp were distinct instruments. The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus informs us that the lyre had ten strings and was played with a plectrum, while the harp had twelve strings stretched over a large resonant sound box and was played with the fingers.

The "khalil" (from Hebrew halil, to pierce or bore) was made from bone and similar to a flute or clarinet. This probably was fitted with a reed mouthpiece. The khalil is mentioned as having secular use rather than ceremonial. In addition, various percussion instruments are named, including the tambourine ("timbrel," "tabret"), cymbals, and the sistrum; the latter being of Egyptian origin and similar to a rattle or castanets.

C. A psalm of supplication is defined as a "poetic cry of distress to the Lord in time of critical need" by Robert Alter, *Literary Guide to the Bible*.

D. The main genres of psalms of praise and psalms of supplication can be divided into subgenres. There are psalms that have an individual character and those that have a communal character.

1. Individual plea for help in times of trouble. For example, in Psalm 3:1, *Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! Many are they that rise up against me*. Or in Psalm 22:1, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*
2. The communal supplication. For example, Psalm 137:1, *By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.*
3. Other genres include the monarchic psalms such as Psalms 2, 72, and 110. Psalm 45 is a poem on a royal marriage, urging the wife to take up her wifely duties:

10. Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house;

11. So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him. (Psalm 45:10–11, KJV)

Rituals of Ancient Jewish Temple Worship

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Reading the Torah

The ancient Hebrews worshiped God at a number of mountaintop holy places, but after Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem, it increasingly became the center of Jewish ritual worship. The chief rites consisted of grain or, more usually, animal sacrifice, officiated over by priests and offered to atone for sin, to render praise or thanks, or simply to establish union with God. Sacrifices were offered daily, with special liturgies conducted on holy days. Solomon's magnificent temple contained a number of courtyards and chambers that surrounded the main building, divided into two rooms. The larger, the Holy Place, was where priests offered sacrifice and incense. The smaller Holy of Holies contained the Ark of the Covenant; it was entered only by the high priest, and only on the Day of Atonement. Solomon's Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE. A second temple was built 70 years later and enlarged by King Herod. It was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE, at which time Jews discontinued the tradition of sacrificial atonement, replacing it with prayer and the performance of good works.

III. The Structure of Hebrew Poetry

A. The main structural element of Hebrew poetry is parallelism: that is, the juxtaposition of two or more clauses that are related in meaning. The two most common relations between the clauses are "synonymy" and "antithesis." But a third can also be found, "synthetic" parallelism.

B. Synonymous parallelism is the most common type in Hebrew poetry. The two clauses are different in form but roughly identical in meaning. For example, in Psalm 38:1: *O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.* Or from Psalm 148:1: *Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights.*

C. Antithetic parallelism occurs when the two clauses show an opposition or contrast of ideas. For example, from Psalm 20:8: *[The ungodly] are brought down and fallen: but we are risen, and stand upright.* Or in Psalm 1:6: *For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.*

D. Synthetic parallelism occurs when the second clause completes the idea begun in the first clause (e.g., "as x, so y"). For example, in Psalm 3:4: *I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah.*

1. There is also cause-and-effect synthetic parallelism. For example, in Psalm 126:3: *The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.*

2. And finally, in synthetic parallelism there is analogous parallelism. For example, in Psalm 125:2: *As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about his people from henceforth even for ever.*

IV. Metaphors Abound in the Book of Psalms

These typically attribute permanence and frailty to humankind. God is a "tower of strength," "a rock," "a shield," "a mountain refuge," "a light," "a shepherd." Man, on the other hand, is compared to a "puff of wind," "chaff," "smoke," "wax," "thistle," "down," "dust," or "flowers of the field."

A. The Book of Psalms also abounds in personifications. For example, in Psalm 98:8, *Let the rivers clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together.* Or, in Psalm 114:4, *The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs.*

B. With these notes on metaphor and personification, we turn to Psalm 22:

1. *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?*

2. *O my God, I cry in the day time, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.*

3. *But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.*

4. *Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.*

5. *They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.*

6. *But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.*
7. *All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,*
8. *He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.*
9. *But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts.*
10. *I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly.*
11. *Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.*
12. *Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.*
13. *They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.*
14. *I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.*
15. *My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.*
16. *For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.*
17. *I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.*
18. *They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.*
19. *But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me.* (Psalm 22:1–19, KJV)

V. Evocation of Psalms in English Literature

The Book of Psalms is most often invoked in English literature during moments of a character's penitence or spiritual awakening. Three brief examples are:

A. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* shows a character who comes to repent of his past life. Crusoe learns to pray using Psalm 50:15: *And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.*

In the end Crusoe celebrates not only his physical rescue but also his spiritual deliverance.

B. Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1848), chapter 4, begins with a scene between young 10-year-old Jane and Mr. Brocklehurst, who is examining her about her Bible reading habits. We begin with Mr. Brocklehurst:

"Do you read your bible?" [Mr. Brocklehurst]

"Sometimes." [the young Jane]

"With pleasure? Are you fond of it?"

"I like Revelations, and the book of Daniel, and Genesis and Samuel, and a little bit of Exodus, and some parts of Kings and Chronicles, and Job and Jonah."

"And the Psalms? I hope you like them?"

"No, sir. The Psalms are not interesting."

Later, as an adult, when Jane's wedding day is ruined, she finds comfort in Psalm 22, *Be not far from me, for trouble is near. There is none to help.*

C. Oscar Wilde also drew penitential eloquence from the Psalms. Wilde turned to the Davidic Penitential Psalm 130, which begins *Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD.* While in prison for gross indecency, Wilde wrote *De Profundis* (ca. 1896), a title borrowed from the Latin version of Psalm 130. In it he writes, *"The gods have given me almost everything. I had genius, a distinguished name, high social position, brilliancy, intellectual daring, but I let myself be lured into long spells of senseless and sensual ease. Tired of being on the heights I deliberately went to the depths in a search for new sensation I ended in horrible disgrace. There is only one thing for me now, absolute humility.*

D. The Book of Psalms has become a central part of both synagogue worship and Christian liturgy. Perhaps the most famous of the psalms is Psalm 23. Listen for the stylistic features we have discussed in this lecture:

1. *The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.*
2. *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.*

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Oscar Wilde
(1854–1900)

The son of an eminent Dublin surgeon, Oscar Wilde became the nineteenth century's greatest British dramatist, as well as a far-ranging man of letters who produced novels, poetry, and philosophical (but always humorous) essays. He attended Trinity College in Dublin, then Magdalen College in Oxford, where he founded the Aesthetic Movement—"art for art's sake." His first novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, catapulted his name into the public eye. He took the London stage by storm with his works. Wilde had two hits simultaneously in 1895 with *An Ideal Husband* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*. His final years were tragic, filled with legal battles, prison, bankruptcy, and broken health.

"In this world there are only two tragedies. One is not getting what one wants, and the other is getting it."

~Oscar Wilde

3. *He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*
4. *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*
5. *Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.*
6. *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.* (Psalm 23:1–6, KJV)

Summary

Composed between the time of David and the Jews' return from their Babylonian exile, compiled sometime later from the sixth to second century BCE, and subsequently invoked throughout Christian literature, the Psalms remain a powerful expression of the human needs both to petition God's assistance and to praise his perceived loving kindness and mercy.

Christian Liturgy

Liturgy is the form of communal worship used by a congregation. The forms of Christian liturgy vary widely from denomination to denomination, from the spontaneity of meetings held by Friends (Quakers) to the elaborate rituals used by the Eastern Orthodox Church. The content of liturgies varies widely, too, and may include hymns by choirs or the whole congregation, psalms, other prayers, personal testimonies, blessings, and preaching. Readings from the Bible are an almost universal element of Christian liturgy. In general, one might say that Protestant congregations emphasize scripture and sermons, while Catholics and Orthodox Christians focus on the celebration of the Eucharist, an offering of bread and wine that becomes the body and blood of Christ. Christian liturgy is organized into a liturgical year, a cycle that commemorates events in the life of Christ as well as the entire history of the world. The liturgical year is broken into varying seasons that emphasize either repentance (Advent, Lent) or joyous celebration (Christmas, Easter, Pentecost), and its highpoint is Holy Week and Easter Sunday, which commemorate the death and resurrection of Christ.

A typical Sunday service at a Lutheran church in Minnesota

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FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. What are the two main types or genres of psalms? How may these genres be subdivided?
2. Define and give examples of the three types of parallelism found in Hebrew poetry—synonymous, antithetic, and synthetic.
3. Identify in Psalm 102 metaphors, similes, and structures of parallelism. How do these devices contribute to the psalm's theme?

Other Books of Interest

Alter, Robert, and Frank Kermode, eds. *The Literary Guide to the Bible*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987.

Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. New York: Penguin, 1999.

Defoe, Daniel. *Robinson Crusoe*. New York: Penguin, 2002.

Lowth, Robert. *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*. Trans. Richard Gregory. 2 vols. Elibron Classics Replica. Chestnut Hill, MA: Adamant Media Corporation, 2005 (1787).

Wilde, Oscar. *De Profundis and Other Writings*. New York: Penguin, 1977.

Recorded Books

Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Narrated by Flo Gibson. UNABRIDGED. Recorded Books. 12 cassettes/17.5 hours or 16 CDs/17.5 hours.

Defoe, Daniel. *Robinson Crusoe*. Narrated by Ron Keith. UNABRIDGED. Recorded Books. 9 cassettes/13.5 hours or 12 CDs/13.5 hours.

Wilde, Oscar. *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Performed by a full cast. UNABRIDGED. Recorded Books. 2 cassettes/2 hours.

———. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Narrated by Steven Crossley. UNABRIDGED. Recorded Books. 6 cassettes/9 hours or 8 CDs/9 hours.

Lecture 7: Proverbs: The Way to Wisdom

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is the Book of Proverbs (Bible, KJV).

Introduction

The Book of Proverbs is the first of the three biblical books of "wisdom literature," along with Ecclesiastes and Job. Proverbs offers worldly wisdom, centered on the virtue of prudence; it proposes a path to prosperity and happiness in the world.

Consider this . . .

Does the Book of Proverbs remain a helpful guide for getting on in the world today?

I. Proverbs: A Book of Wisdom Literature

A. The three biblical books of wisdom literature—Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes—are more worldly and cosmopolitan than other books of the Bible. These books were probably written down during the fourth century BCE and are quite different from the other books of the Bible.

1. Proverbs is an ancient "self-help" book that assumes that the just will be rewarded in this life.
2. Job poses the question, why do the just sometimes suffer unjustly? Job is a just man who is made to suffer horribly because of a wager between Satan and Yahweh.
3. Ecclesiastes seems not even to expect justice in the public affairs of men, but rather advises that we enjoy innocent domestic pleasures while we may. Ecclesiastes advises, *"go thy way, eat thy bread with joy and drink thy wine with a merry heart."*

II. Proverbs: An Anthology of Ancient Wisdom-Sayings

Chapters 1 to 9 are thought to be a relatively late editorial addition in which wisdom is characterized as a divine quality. Proverbs is traditionally attributed to Solomon, Proverbs 1:1: *"The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel."*

A. Proverbs may indeed not be actually authored by Solomon but rather attributed to him because of his wisdom, as evidenced in 1 Kings 4:30: *"And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt."* Verse 32 continues, *"And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five."*

B. We begin our study of Proverbs with chapters 1 to 9, which constitute a rather long introduction to the book presenting wisdom as a divine quality.

C. Chapter 8 is an account of the divine origin of wisdom. Wisdom speaks in a woman's voice:

12. I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions.

13. The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.

14. Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength.

15. By me kings reign, and princes decree justice.

16. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth.

17. I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.

18. Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness.

19. My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver.

20. I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment:

21. That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures.

22. The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.

23. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.

24. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water.

25. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth:

26. While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world.

27. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth:

28. When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep:

29. When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth:

30. Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him. (Proverbs 8:12–30, KJV)

III. Structure of Proverbs

The Proverbs are largely structured, like the Psalms, by three types of parallelism: synonymous, antithetic, and synthetic.

A. Antithetic parallelism is the main structure of the Proverbs, as we see in this example in Proverbs 1:7: *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."* Or from one of the more secular Proverbs, 10:4: *"He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich."* Another example comes in Proverbs 15:1: *"A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger."*

B. The second formal feature is synonymous parallelism. For example, in Proverbs 19:29: *"Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the back of fools."* Or Proverbs 20:23: *"Diverse weights are an abomination unto the LORD; and a false balance is not good."*

C. The third formal feature is synthetic parallelism.

1. For example in Proverbs 22:6: *"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."*
2. An example of comparative completion as found in Proverbs 15:17: *"Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith."*
3. Another type of synthetic parallelism is when the second clause completes the first by analogy, as in Proverbs 11:22: *"As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion."* Or in Proverbs 26:14: *"As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed."* And in our last example,

Henry Fielding: *Tom Jones* (1749)

Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* is a rollicking and often bawdy novel of adventure, a panoramic view of eighteenth-century English society, and last but not least a moral tale concerning true prudence—the ability to act in one's own best interest while also keeping an eye toward the good of some larger community. Tom, a foundling, is raised by the virtuous Squire Allworthy on his estate in Somersetshire, England; like most foundlings in world literature (compare to Oedipus and Moses), Tom will turn out to have an important ancestry—he is, in fact, Allworthy's nephew, and will become heir to his estate. Before he can discover his true identity, however, he first must become worthy of it, and he does this by learning prudence. First, Tom undergoes a series of tribulations brought upon him by his youthful imprudence: he is separated from both Squire Allworthy and the woman he loves, Sophia Western; his travels lead him from the relative safety of country life to the treacherousness of Georgian London. In London, however, Tom learns prudence—he discovers how to learn from the past, plan toward the future, and keep the greater good in mind—and is rewarded by marriage to the lovely Sophia, whose name in Greek means "wisdom." At a moral level, Tom Jones illustrates Proverbs 8:12: "I wisdom dwell with prudence."

Proverbs 26:11: *"As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly."*

Many of these Hebrew proverbs have been shortened but are still used in modern English. Consider Proverbs 13:24: *"He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes."* Our modern English version is "spare the rod, spoil the child." In a similar example, Proverbs 16:18: *"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall,"* is condensed to "pride goes before a fall."

IV. The Basic Assumption of Proverbs

A. What the Book of Proverbs teaches is that one reaps what one sows: there is justice in human events. Accordingly, prudent self-interest is a sufficient motive to virtuous behavior.

Consider the following proverbs showing that one reaps as one sows:

27. He that diligently seeketh good procureth favour: but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him. (Proverbs 11:27, KJV)

25. The generous soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself. (Proverbs 11:25, KJV)

Consider these other proverbs:

1. The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.

2. Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death.

3. The LORD will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish: but he casteth away the substance of the wicked.
(Proverbs 10:1–3, KJV)

5. He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame.

6. Blessings are upon the head of the just: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

7. The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot. (Proverbs 10:5-7, KJV)

And a few others from chapter 23:

19. Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way.

20. Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh:

21. For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.
(Proverbs 23:19–21, KJV)

B. The key virtue in Proverbs is prudence.

V. Two Responses to the Book of Proverbs in English Literature

A. Fielding's *Tom Jones* is at one level an allegory built upon the line spoken by personified wisdom (Proverbs 8:12): *"I wisdom dwell with prudence."*

B. William Blake, in "The Proverbs of Hell" from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790–93), heralded the Romantic revolution when he characterized prudence as *"a rich ugly old maid courted by Incapacity."*

Blake's proverbs celebrate energy:

> You never know what is enough unless you know what is more than enough.
>
> The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom.
>
> Excess of sorrow laughs, excess of laughter weeps.
>
> The tigers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction.

Summary

The Book of Proverbs, rather like an ancient "self-help" book, promises to teach the way to success and contentment. Its central value of prudent self-interest animated moral writers through the eighteenth century, but came under attack during the Romantic era by William Blake and others who valued noble daring and self-realization over prudence and cautious restraint; in literature, the Book of Proverbs has never recovered from its Romantic critique.

William Blake
(1757–1827)

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Detail engraving after a portrait of William Blake by Thomas Phillips

Blake, the son of a London haberdasher, was a poet, engraver, and painter. He entered drawing school at age ten, and at fourteen he began an apprenticeship to an engraver, reading widely in his free time. At twenty-four he married Catherine Boucher, and she became his assistant in engraving and printing. In 1788 he discovered the method of relief etching, which he would use in what he called his "illuminated books"—books of poetry, design, and drawing that he laboriously etched, printed, and hand-painted. Among his most famous illuminated books are *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (which contains "The Tyger") and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. Blake's works mix satire, prophecy, and creative biblical interpretation in a rich and fascinating manner. He once declared that "all he knew was in the Bible," and that "The Old and New Testaments are the Great Code of Art." Blake was not, however, an orthodox Bible reader: in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, for example, all the debates are won by the devils, who represent energy, abundance, act, and freedom—qualities that Blake associated with the early days of the French Revolution.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. What are the ways the Book of Proverbs may seem different in orientation from the other books of the Bible we've read in this course?
2. What's the advice that the Proverbs offer on business dealings? How to get ahead in life? Sex? Child-rearing?
3. What about the Book of Proverbs did William Blake object to?

Other Books of Interest

Blake, William. *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. Ed. Geoffrey Keynes. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.

Fielding, Henry. *Tom Jones*. Eds. John Bender and Simon Stern. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Tannenbaum, Leslie. *Biblical Tradition in Blake's Early Prophecies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982.

Websites to Visit

1. *The William Blake Archive* provides the text to William Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* — www.blakearchive.org
2. The *Bartleby* website features the text to Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* — www.bartleby.com/301

Lecture 8: The Book of Job: The Problem of Evil and the Aesthetics of the Sublime

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is the Book of Job (Bible, KJV).

Introduction

The Book of Job introduces two separate but ultimately related topics: first, the theological problem of evil—that is, if one assumes the existence of a benevolent deity, then why do bad things happen to good people?—and second, the aesthetics of the sublime—that is, why do we derive pleasure from artistic representations of terrifying or destructive things?

Consider this . . .

1. Why did Job's friends assume that he had sinned?
2. How does Job's relationship with God change throughout the book of Job? Or does it?
3. Why was the book of Job written?

I. Job and the Problem of Evil

A. We begin in Job 1:1. *"There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil."*

Job, a perfectly just man, is not a Jew and is from a land that has no special covenant with God. He is made to suffer undeservedly, and he asks why this is so.

1. There are two types of evil in Job, the first being moral evil.
2. The second type of evil is natural evil, or the evil that is the result of natural occurrences.

B. Proverbs, and other books of Israelite history, assumed that good is rewarded and evil is punished; therefore, whoever suffers must have sinned. Defeat in battle, or disease, is a sign of sin.

C. Job's friends offer this same opinion to Job as he is suffering. They tell him to repent whatever he has done to end his pain and return to his life of prosperity. As Zophar says in the second part of Job 4:6; *"Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth."*

D. Job, however, is aware of his virtue and knows his suffering is unmerited. In fact in Job 1:8, God affirmed Job's virtue: *"And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none*

like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?"

E. God's reply debunks the myth that evil begets evil.

F. In chapter 10, Job considers what to say to God about his suffering:

> *2. I will say unto God, Do not condemn me; shew me wherefore thou contendest, with me.*
>
> *3. Is it good unto thee that thou shouldest oppress, that thou shouldest despise the work of thine hands, and shine upon the counsel of the wicked?*
>
> *4. Hast thou eyes of flesh? or seest thou as man seeth?* (Job 10:2–4, KJV)

Job concludes his interrogation of God's purposes in Job 13:15: *"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him."*

G. Robert Frost's play *The Masque of Reason* consists of a dialog between Job, his wife, and God. In this play God says to Job:

> *I've had you on my mind a thousand years*
> *To thank you someday for the way you helped me*
> *Establish once for all the principle*
> *There's no connection man can reason out*
> *Between his just deserts and what he gets.* (ll. 47–51)

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Robert Frost's Play
The Masque of Reason

Robert Frost (1874–1963) is perhaps America's most widely read and most frequently quoted poet. Frost, a poetic (and political) conservative, pointedly eschewed the verse forms adopted by many of his contemporaries, memorably comparing the use of free verse to "playing tennis without the net." This cost him the approval of some critics, but his place in the first rank of American letters is secure.

Frost was a self-described "Old Testament Christian," but in *The Masque of Reason* he comes very close to process theology—the school of thought that holds that God, like the Universe itself, changes and evolves over time. Structured as a one-act play in verse (though it is very rarely performed), *Masque* is a conversation between God, Job, and Job's wife, long after the events described in the biblical text. God explains to Job that *"There's no connection man can reason out/Between his just deserts and what he gets"* (line 50–51). In the end, however, He admits that *"I was just showing off to the Devil, Job"* (line 327). Frost's last line, of course, is tongue in cheek.

Frost was not the only modern author to retell the story of Job—others include Archibald MacLiesh, Neil Simon, Flannery O'Connor, and H.G. Wells.

Job's wife complains about this, saying,

> *All You can seem to do is lose Your temper*
> *When reason-hungry mortals ask for reasons.*
> *I did my wifely duty. I should tremble!*
> *Of course, in the abstract high singular*
> *There isn't any universal reason;*
> *And no one but a man would think there was.*
> *You don't catch women trying to be Plato.*
> *Still there must be lots of unsystematic*
> *Stray scraps of palliative reason.*
> *It wouldn't hurt You to vouchsafe the faithful.*

H. What Job and his wife are getting at is that God's reply from the whirlwind (chapters 38–41) does not answer Job, but teaches him (in the poet Robert Frost's phrase) to *"submit to unreason."*

> 1. *Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said,*
> 2. *Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?*
> 3. *Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.*
> 4. *Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.*
> 5. *Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it?*
> 6. *Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof;*
> 7. *When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?* (Job 38:1–7, KJV)

Yahweh is setting up the smallness of humanity instead of answering Job's question. He goes on in Job 38:26, stating he causes *"it to rain on the earth, where no man is; on the wilderness, wherein there is no man."* Yahweh implies the presence of man only once in this chapter, in speaking of the eagle, *"Her young ones also suck up blood: and where the slain are, there is she."* (Job 39:30)

I. In Job God is referring to his part in creation, but it is unlike other earlier biblical accounts of creation where man is the perfection of creation. Psalm 8 had addressed God:

> 5. *For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.*
> 6. *Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:*
> 7. *All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field;*
> 8. *The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.* (Psalm 8:5–8, KJV)

J. As if in direct response to the praise in Psalm 8, God displays his incomprehensible power by describing to Job the amoral strength of his creatures, Behemoth and Leviathan, in Job 41:

1. *Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down?*
2. *Canst thou put an hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn?*
3. *Will he make many supplications unto thee? will he speak soft words unto thee?*
4. *Will he make a covenant with thee? wilt thou take him for a servant for ever?*
5. *Wilt thou play with him as with a bird? or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens?*
6. *Shall the companions make a banquet of him? shall they part him among the merchants?*
7. *Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons? or his head with fish spears?* (Job 41:1–7, KJV)

And God goes on to say that although man can't control Leviathan, God can.

11. *Who hath prevented me, that I should repay him? whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine.*
12. *I will not conceal his parts, nor his power, nor his comely proportion.* (Job 41:11–12, KJV)

With Yahweh's description of seemingly amoral power, we move into the next subject.

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Leviathan and Behemoth

Leviathan, meaning "coiled one," is the name of an ancient sea creature subdued by God. It is mentioned in the Old Testament books of Isaiah, Psalms, and Job. The creature had a serpentine or dragon-like form—as we see in the illustration above by William Blake. Apocalyptic literature shows leviathan as throwing off his fetters at the end of the present age and being defeated in a final conflict with the divine. Leviathan was seen in ancient legend as a sea monster that engaged in warfare with the gods, or as a remnant of primordial chaos that needed subduing. *Behemoth* is a large animal God created and is known for its enormous strength and toughness. It is thought to be somewhat like a hippopotamus. Behemoth is described in Job 40:15–24.

II. Job and the Aesthetics of the Sublime

A. The ancient Greek writer Longinus defined "the sublime" (Greek, *hus-pos*) as that which, rhetorically, overpowers us, revealing *"in a flash . . . the full power of the speaker."* That power may be compared to the power of an aggressor. The taste for the sublime is the taste for submission. And this is indeed what Job does at the end of the book of Job; he submits.

B. Robert Lowth, in his Oxford lectures *On the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (1753), addresses Job as a sublime book. Lowth says of Yahweh's speech to Job, *"it is adapted in every aspect to the incitement of terror and is universally animated with the true spirit of sublimity."*

C. Edmund Burke's famous essay *Philosophical Enquiry Concerning the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) elaborates on the sublime of terror in Job. Burke writes, *"Power derives all its sublimity from the terror with which it is generally accompanied."* He continues, *"Let us look at a strong animal in the two distinct lights in which we can consider him. The horse can be considered as a useful beast, fit for the plow, the road, etc. But in every social useful light the horse says nothing of the sublime. But in this passage from Job, the useful character of the horse entirely disappears and the terrible and the sublime blaze out together."*

The Name of God

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Names are often considered symbolic of a person's essential identity, and this holds true for the name of God. God's personal name is Yahweh, which is related to the Hebrew verb "to be" and may mean "I am," designating God as the source of all being. God himself revealed his name to Moses in a phrase that the KJV translates with "I am that I am" (Exod. 3:14); this act of self-disclosure reveals the intimate nature of God's relationship to his chosen people. The name is written in Hebrew with four letters transliterated YHWH (called the Tetragrammaton), formerly anglicized as "Jehovah," although now most scholars use "Yahweh." Jews hold the name sacred and never pronounce it, substituting the title "Adonai" (lord) when they read scripture aloud. The Bible speaks of God under a number of titles, including El (god), Elohim (a plural, "divine powers"), El Shaddai (god of the mountain), Yahweh Sabaoth ("Lord of the hosts" in the KJV), and El Elyon (god most high). The Bible also depicts God as king, military leader, shepherd, judge, potter, husband, father, and even mother. All of these roles are metaphors that can only hint at the identity of God, a being who both reveals and conceals himself from human understanding.

And Burke then quotes the speech from God in Job 39:19–24. *"Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? . . . the glory of his nostrils is terrible . . . He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet."* Burke goes on to the description of Leviathan. He then concludes that the sublime *"comes upon us in the gloomy forest, in the howling wilderness, in the form of the lion, the tiger, the panther, or rhinoceros. Whenever strength is only useful and employed for our benefit or pleasure then it is never sublime. For only that which thwarts our will can be the cause of a grand and commanding conception."*

D. Is William Blake's "The Tyger" a response to the Book of Job?

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright,
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?
In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?
And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?
When the stars threw down their spears,
And water'd heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?
Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

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Summary

Although Job clearly poses the theological problem of evil—why do natural and moral evils afflict good people?—God's response to Job does not answer his question but rather overwhelms him with a sense of his own human weakness and insignificance. God's overpowering speech in Job was adduced by later biblical and literary critics as a prime example of the literary sublime, an aesthetic category that seeks to account for the pleasure we take in representations of things that cause or threaten to cause human suffering. The Book of Job, then, deflects or transforms the problem of pain and evil into a different category, the pleasure we can take in verbal images of things that can cause pain and evil.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. How does Job respond to the problem of evil? How do his three friends respond to it?
2. Does God finally answer Job's questions about why he was made to suffer unjustly? Why, do you think, does God answer Job in the way that he does?
3. Employing Longinus' or Burke's definition of the sublime, can you identify other scenes in literature, art, or film that strike you as sublime?

Other Books of Interest

Blake, William. *The Tyger*. The Longman Anthology of British Literature, Vol. 2, pp. 129–130. New York: Pearson Longman, 2006.

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Frost, Robert. *The Complete Poems*. 2nd rev. ed. Ed. Edward Lathem. New York: Owl Books, 2002.

Lowth, Robert. *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*. Trans. Richard Gregory. 2 vols. Elibron Classics Replica. Chestnut Hill, MA: Adamant Media Corporation, 2005 (1787).

Websites to Visit

The Other Pages website provides the text to Blake's *The Tyger* — www.theotherpages.org/poems/blake04.html#tyger

Lecture 9: Ecclesiastes and the Questioning of Wisdom

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is Ecclesiastes (Bible, KJV).

Introduction

Whereas Job questions God's justice, Ecclesiastes, or the Preacher, scarcely seems even to expect justice in human events. Ecclesiastes, called by the late Victorian critic George Saintsbury "the saddest and wisest book ever written," is an oration on the "vanity" or emptiness of most human ambitions and pursuits; the determining role of chance in most successes and failures; and the lone certainty of death.

Consider this . . .

1. What is the full title of the book and what significance does it have?
2. Ecclesiastes represents a new literary form in the Bible. Does it speak to a new audience based upon changing social circumstances?

I. Introduction to Ecclesiastes

Who was Koheleth teaching? Ecclesiastes 12:9 gives an answer: *"And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs."*

II. The Knowledge the Preacher or, in Hebrew, Koheleth, Is Trying to Impart Is "Vanity of Vanities, All Is Vanity"

A. This book is often, as are the other wisdom books, attributed to Solomon. But Ecclesiastes is a very bleak, dark book for Solomon.

B. In his essay *Of Polygamy and Divorces*, David Hume offers the following explanation for Solomon's depression:

The Asiatic practice of polygamy is as destructive to friendship as to love. Jealousy excludes men from all intimacies and familiarities with each other. No one dares bring his friend to his house or table lest he bring a lover to his numerous wives. Hence all over the east each family is as much separate from another as if they were so many distinct kingdoms.

No wonder then that Solomon living with seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines was separated from the world!

C. Koheleth first introduces his position in Ecclesiastes chapter 1:2–8:

2. *Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.*
3. *What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?*
4. *One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever.*
5. *The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose.*
6. *The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits.*
7. *All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.*
8. *All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.* (Ecclesiastes 1:2–8, KJV)

The Temple of Solomon

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Solomon in His Temple

1 Kings 5–7 describes the luxurious materials and high degree of craftsmanship with which Solomon had the Temple constructed. The Temple was built of "costly stones, hewn stones" (1 Kings 5:17), and then lined with cedar beams and panels. In spite of the second commandment's ban on carved images, these cedar panels and olive and fir wooden doors were carved with figures of flowers, palm trees, and cherubim, and two large cherubim were placed in the Holy of Holies. All the carvings were covered in gold, as were the incense altar and table for ceremonial bread that the KJV calls "shewbread." Kings reports that Solomon hired the brassworker Hiram of Tyre to cast some of the Temple furnishings. These included two large pillars decorated with lilies, pomegranates, and patterns of checkers and chains; ten lavers and their bases for the priests to cleanse themselves; and an enormous "molten sea," or large basin, on a base of twelve oxen. 2 Chronicles gives a somewhat different story of the building of the Temple that reports that Hiram was "skillful to work in gold, and in silver, in brass, in iron, in stone" as well as in other materials (2 Chron. 2:14)—from which derives the tradition, important in Freemasonry, that Hiram was the architect of the Temple.

D. Koheleth sees that all is vain because everything in nature is cyclical or alternating, rather than purposeful or teleological. As Koheleth continues in chapter 1:

> 9. *The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.*
> 10. *Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us.* (Ecclesiastes 1:9–10, KJV)

E. Koheleth sees this repetition in human affairs as well, as expressed in this very famous passage:

> 1. *To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:*
> 2. *A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;*
> 3. *A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;*
> 4. *A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;*
> 5. *A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;*
> 6. *A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;*
> 7. *A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;*
> 8. *A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.*
> 9. *What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth?*
> 10. *I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it.* (Ecclesiastes 3:1–10, KJV)

F. The Preacher implicitly criticizes the basic assumption of Proverbs: in his worldview, justice doesn't hold in human affairs. In Proverbs one reaps what one sows; there are moral consequences for man's actions. Ecclesiastes speaks of mere succession of events; there is no underlying justice to human affairs. Chapter 8:14:

> *There is a vanity which is done upon the earth; that there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous: I said that this also is vanity.*

And again from Chapter 9:11:

> *I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.*

Thus there in Ecclesiastes there is no connection between one's actions and one's fortune.

G. The only certainty, for the Preacher, is death, and in that all are levelled:

> *19. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity.*
>
> *20. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.* (Ecclesiastes 3:19–20, KJV)

And in Chapter 9:2:

> *All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked.*

H. Ecclesiastes 12:1–8 is an allegory of aging and death.

> *1. Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;*
>
> *2. While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain:*
>
> *3. In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened,*
>
> *4. And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low;*
>
> *5. Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets:*
>
> *6. Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.*
>
> *7. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*
>
> *8. Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity.* (Ecclesiastes 12:1–8, KJV)

Note that these are Koheleth's last words. These are a poignant description of old age and dying.

I. Recall Proverbs 10:7, *"The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot …"* But to Koheleth the memory of the just, like the memory of the wicked, passes. As he says in Ecclesiastes 1:11, *"There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come*

after." Or in Ecclesiastes 2:16, *"For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool."*

J. The finality of death does not prompt Koheleth to recommend a life of reckless abandon. We can review the elements Koheleth views as vanity.

1. In chapter 1:8 we are told that wisdom is vanity, *"For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow."*
2. There is no pleasure in great wealth, either.
3. A wicked woman is a vanity. From chapter 7:26. *"And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets."*

III. The Book of Ecclesiastes Has Two Different Conclusions

A. There is an editorial post-script to the Preacher's oration—Ecclesiastes 12:9–14—which concludes,

12. And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

13. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. (Ecclesiastes 12:12–13, KJV)

James Joyce's *Ulysses*

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In a "Periodic Table of Literature," Joyce would occupy the place of plutonium: remarkably dense, but filled with nearly boundless energy. Joyce (1882–1941) stands as one of the most radically innovative prose stylists of the twentieth century, realizing his own self-stated ambition "to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated consciousness of my race." Though he ostentatiously rejected its narrow dogmatism, Joyce's strict Catholic education is reflected in much of his fiction.

Ulysses can be read as a carefully structured parallel to Homer's *Odyssey*, in which every episode in the novel corresponds in some way to an episode in the epic poem. Leopold Bloom, a Dublin Jew, is cast as Ulysses, whom Joyce regarded as the most "complete" character in literature, and is followed throughout the course of a single day. He attends a funeral, eats lunch in a pub, ogles a young girl and frets about his unfaithful wife—Bloom is Everyman and Dublin is a microcosm.

Bloom is in sharp contrast to the aloof young Stephen Deadalus, "the artist, like the God of creation, (who) remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails." Bloom, who assumes the role of Stephen's protector late in the book, comes to display the same deeply humane qualities we see in the Preacher.

B. The Preacher's own conclusion, however, is from Chapter 2:24, *"There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God."* Koheleth is more emphatic about this point in Chapter 8:15, *"Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry."*

C. And, of course, it is not much fun to seize the day by yourself, so Koheleth recommends the pleasures of cooperation. From chapter 4:9–12:

> 9. *Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour.*
> 10. *For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.*
> 11. *Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone?*
> 12. *And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.* (Ecclesiastes 4:9–12, KJV)

D. Therefore, Koheleth concludes in chapter 9:7–10, one should just go on and enjoy the life and family one has.

> 7. *Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works.*
> 8. *Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment.*
> 9. *Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun.*
> 10. *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.* (Ecclesiastes 9:7–10, KJV)

Summary

The voice of the Preacher or Koheleth maintains that most human pursuits—after great riches, fame, even wisdom itself—are "vanities"; chance has a way of leveling human designs, and death finally levels everyone, consigning them, the good as well as the bad, to oblivion. The best thing one can do is accept the innocent joys that turn up from day to day, especially those that revolve around friendship and marriage, merriment and labor. Ecclesiastes ends with the somewhat more orthodox editorial coda that enjoins us to fear God and keep the commandments.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Ecclesiastes opens with images of cyclical nature. What is the Preacher's attitude toward the cycles of nature?
2. "All is vanity," says the Preacher—but what human activities strike him as particularly vain or empty, and what activities strike him as less vain?
3. To what degree does the editorial coda to Ecclesiastes get to the heart of the Preacher's message? Alternatively, to what degree does the editorial coda limit or distort the Preacher's message?

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Potkay, Adam. *The Passion for Happiness: Samuel Johnson and David Hume*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000.

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Joyce, James. *Ulysses*. Narrated by Donal Donnelly and Miriam Healy-Louie. UNABRIDGED. Recorded Books. 30 cassettes/42.5 hours or 40 CDs/42.5 hours.

Lecture 10: Isaiah and Prophecy

The Suggested Readings for this lecture are the Book of Isaiah (Bible, KJV) and the "Book of Isaiah: Introduction and Outline" on pages 102–103 of this course guide.

Introduction

With the Book of Isaiah we move into the biblical era of the "Latter Prophets" and introduce the distinctive biblical genre of prophecy—a combination of preaching, poetry, and politics. The style of Isaiah may initially be difficult to follow because it is not organized as a narrative or linear argument, but rather builds by variously combining several oratorical topics, including the prospect of destruction in war, and the promise of divine restoration. The Book of Isaiah is further complicated by including three different authors or "Isaiahs" from three different eras of Judean history.

Consider this . . .

Biblical literature as social commentary—is this the origin of the blending of politics and art?

I. The "Later Prophets": Critics and Reformists

Whereas Ecclesiastes was a critic of conventional values with a moderate hedonist agenda, Isaiah—and the other "Later Prophets" (chiefly Jeremiah and Ezekiel)—were critics of Israelite society with reformist religious and political agendas. They denounced the rich and powerful.

A. William Blake in his *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* particularly identified with the work of Isaiah. In fact he gives him the following words in that work: *"The voice of honest indignation is the voice of God. I cared not for consequences but wrote."*

B. Prophecy is not only an act of foretelling. The later prophets, in Blake's words were *"honest men."* This is Blake on what a prophet is: *"Every honest man is a prophet; he utters his opinions both of private and of public matters, thus, 'if you go on so, the result is so.' He never says 'such a thing shall happen let you do what you will.' A prophet is a seer, not an arbitrary dictator."*

C. The later prophets were simply stating what would happen if things continued on their current path. This stream of prophecy can be compared to 1960s folk singers like Bob Dylan.

D. This distinctive genre of written prophecy was revived in the Romantic period and later in the folk movement of the 1960s. It is a combination of preaching, politics, and poetry.

II. The Four Central Themes of Isaiah

A. Calling the People to Repentance.

Isaiah begins with this call to the people in chapter 1:

> *2. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.*
>
> *3. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.*
>
> *4. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.* (Isaiah 1:2–4, KJV)

The History of the Prophets

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Ezekiel prophesizing the siege of Jerusalem

The role of the Old Testament prophets was not primarily to foretell the future but rather to manifest God's will through preaching—an activity that might include anticipating future events. The prophet is called by God and is assumed to be divinely inspired.

Moses, as lawgiver and leader of the Exodus, is a prototypical prophet, the Old Testament prophet with the highest authority. His work is continued by those prophets who held power during the conquest and settlement of the Promised Land and served as the consciences of Israel's and Judah's earliest kings. These are figures whose actions are related in those biblical books sometimes termed "the former prophets," the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. They include Deborah, who offers prophecy concerning war (Judges 4–5); Samuel, who oversees the transition to monarchy and anoints kings; Nathan, who advises David and criticizes his adultery with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12); and Elijah and his disciple Elisha, who both combat the worship of foreign gods. Elijah is noted for having been taken to heaven in a fiery chariot, Elisha for picking up his mantel (2 Kings 2).

The "latter prophets" are those whose writings, or writings attributed to them, are included in the canon of scripture. Of these—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel—are considered major because of the length of their work, and twelve are considered minor because of their brevity. But the historical context for all is the same: All urge Israel to remain true to Yahweh in the face of foreign invasions and the attendant temptation to idolatry. The rise of Assyria and its attack on the northern kingdom of Israel furnished the context for the writings of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah; Jeremiah and Ezekiel are the prophets of the Babylonian Exile. Daniel is also depicted as living during the Babylonian Exile, but his prophecies in fact concern the fate of the Jews during their persecution by the idolater Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 BCE). What unites all the prophets is their zeal in speaking the word of God.

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A depiction of Isaiah coming to Hezekiah's deathbed

The Era of Isaiah: History from a Biblical Perspective

Isaiah, usually considered the greatest Old Testament prophet, exercised his prophetic ministry in the kingdom of Judah for sixty years. He served from about 740 BCE until the last years of Hezekiah or early years of Manassah. Isaiah was a prophet during the time when the original nation of Israel had been divided into two kingdoms—Israel in the north and Judah in the south. He was primarily a prophet to Judah, speaking and writing mainly in Jerusalem. Isaiah was a contemporary of Amos and Hosea in Israel and Micah in Judah. He lived to see the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of Israel in 722 BCE.

During this period Israel had sinned greatly, and Judah was headed in the same direction. Judah perverted justice, oppressed the poor, turned from God to idols, and looked to pagan nations rather than God for military aid. It was the prophet's role to speak for God and confront the people and leaders. Isaiah spoke forcefully and candidly and was not popular.

With the exception of Hezekiah, the kings of Judah and Israel during Isaiah's ministry were wicked and evil. In Israel, Menahem (752–732 BCE) imposed heavy taxes and oppressed the people. Pehahiah (742–732 BCE) continued idol worship. And Hoshea (732–721 BCE) was taxed heavily by Assyria and was eventually conquered, bringing about Israelite captivity and the resettlement of foreigners in Israel. Israel was more tied into international politics than was Judah because it was traversed by the primary east-west trade route and was larger and more populous. Therefore, it was destined to fall more quickly than did Judah. Still, Judah was tottering, both morally

and politically. Ahaz (735–697 BCE) sacrificed his own son and nailed the temple doors shut. Hezekiah (715–697 BCE) was the exception to the rule and brought about religious reform to Judah. However, he foolishly showed messengers the wealth of his kingdom. Manassah's reign (697–642 BCE) was known as one of unfaithfulness to God.

Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt were the other key players during the years of Isaiah's prophecy. Assyria in northwest Mesopotamia was founded by the energetic monarch Tiglath-pileser III, who ruled from 745 to 727 BCE. He was succeeded by Shalmaneser V (726–722 BCE) and Sargon II (721–705 BCE) in Isaiah's period. The nation was powerful until Asshurbanipal's reign (668–627 BCE), when it began to crumble; the capital, Nineveh, fell to the Babylonians in 612 BCE.

Babylon was a city-state in southern Mesopotamia and eventually became a large empire that absorbed the nations of Judah and destroyed Jerusalem. During the period of the Assyrian Empire, this warlike neighbor to the north dominated Babylon. A dynastic dispute in 851 BCE brought the intervention of the Assyrian King Shalmaneser III. Though Babylonian kings remained nominally independent, they were subject to Assyrian "protection." A series of coups in Babylon prompted Assyrian Tiglath-pileser III to enter Babylon in 728 BCE and proclaim himself king under the throne name of Pulu.

During this same period Egypt experienced a resurgence of power in the twenty-fourth Dynasty (725–709 BCE), and there was occasional international intrigue among the Palestinian states to overthrow Assyria. The so-called petty states of Palestine—Syria, Philistia, Moab, Edom, Ammon, Arabia, Tyre, Israel, and Judah—were ultimately conquered or made tributary to Assyria. Because these petty states had strong feelings of nationalism, they acted duplicitously and fomented rebellion against Assyria. It was a world of intrigue born of political and economic frustrations. It was in this era that Isaiah exercised his prophetic ministry.

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Here we see a passage specifically assigning corruption to the people and calling for repentance.

B. Denouncing bad religion and social injustices.

Moving down we see this second oratorical topic: God is denouncing religion that comprises ritual only.

> *11. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or he goats.*
>
> *12. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?*
>
> *13. Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.* (Isaiah 1:11–13, KJV)

Here God seems to frown on organized religion, including sacrifice, and instead prefers social morality as we see in the subsequent verses:

> *16. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;*
>
> *17. Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.* (Isaiah 1:16–17, KJV)

C. Announcing coming destruction.

Then God warns in 1:28, *"And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed."*

God pronounces his judgment upon the nation.

D. Promising future restoration, a new era of peace will follow.

Almost immediately we move into the next chapter and God's promise of future restoration:

> *2. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.* (Isaiah 2:2, KJV)

And:

> *4. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.* (Isaiah 2:4, KJV)

III. Three Authors

Scholars now generally agree that the Book of Isaiah as a whole comprises the writings of three different men whose lives spanned a roughly three-hundred-year period. These three different "Isaiahs" are known as:

A. Isaiah (ca. 780–692 BCE): Chapters 1–39. This portion is actually attributed to the prophet Isaiah. He is one of four eighth-century prophets.

Some of these chapters were added at a later date, including chapters 13 and 14, the Burden of Babylon, and chapters 24 to 27, the Apocalypse of Isaiah.

B. Deutero-Isaiah (second half of sixth century BCE): Chapters 40–55.

This portion speaks of a new exodus (similar to the one Moses led). For example in Isaiah 40:3, *"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."*

C. Trito-Isaiah (fifth century BCE): Chapters 56–66. This "Isaiah" addresses the Jews who have returned to Judea. He concludes with a glorious vision in which God will *"create new heavens and a new earth."* (Isaiah 65:17, KJV)

From this third Isaiah we see Jerusalem personified as a woman and God as a bridegroom:

> *1. For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*
>
> *2. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.*
>
> *3. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.*
>
> *4 Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.* (Isaiah 62:1–4, KJV)

Details on the lives and historical contexts of these three figures may be found in the course guide's "Book of Isaiah: Introduction and Outline" (pp. 102–103).

D. What unites all three Isaiahs is their shared belief in a relatively simple cycle of history in which the people of Israel enjoy God's favor as long as they heed the prophets and act justly and piously; conversely, injustice and religious laxity cause the people to be defeated and enslaved until, in their anguish, they turn back to God and He raises up a leader to deliver a remnant of his people.

History proceeds cyclically, so that the proud will be humbled, and the humble exalted. The first Isaiah denounces the stratification of society and the forcing out of smaller farmers. This is shown in Isaiah 5:8:

> *"Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!"*

1. A famous illustration of the humbling of the proud comes in Isaiah 14 with the anticipated fall of "Lucifer" (the king of Babylon).

4. That thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased! (Isaiah 14:4, KJV)

2. The writer then addresses the king:

11. Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee.

12. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

13. For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

14. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

15. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. (Isaiah 14:11–15, KJV)

3. Later tradition will equate this "Lucifer" with Satan, the cast out angel who led a rebellion in heaven. This tradition culminates in John Milton's *Paradise Lost.*

E. Isaiah anticipates the future restoration of Judah, most famously in his image of the peaceable kingdom:

6. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. (Isaiah 11:6, KJV)

9. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:9, KJV)

F. Trito-Isaiah foretells not only the restored kingdom of Judah, but the future renovation of the cosmos in a vision of *"new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind"* (Isaiah 65:17, KJV).

Summary

For all its historical complexities, the Book of Isaiah is united around a central axis of foretold destruction and anticipated restoration. The destruction and restoration prophesied by the Isaiahs is, chiefly, ethnic and national—it concerns the Jews and Judea—but it expands, by the final chapters of the Trito-Isaiah, to encompass the destruction and ideal re-creation of the entire cosmos.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. What are the four main oratorical themes that one finds in the Book of Isaiah?
2. What are the respective historical circumstances of the three Isaiahs?
3. Describe the prophets' cyclical conception of history and what it meant for their prophetic writings.

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Websites to Visit

Official website of the Assyrian International News Agency — www.aina.org

Lecture 11: Typology: The Life of Christ as Fulfillment of the Old Testament

The Suggested Readings for this lecture are Johan and the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke (Bible, KJV).

Introduction

Even the most casual reader is struck with how often the New Testament quotes the Old Testament as a prediction of the life of Jesus. This lecture examines this pattern of quotation, which constitutes an interpretive system called typology. We'll study the typological system at work by looking at how Jesus draws on two Old Testament stories: Jonah and the Whale, and the Exodus.

Consider this . . .

1. What are the four levels of meaning commonly used in typological interpretation?
2. How is the New Testament's typological relation to the Old Testament problematic and perhaps even disquieting?

I. Relationship of the Old and New Testaments

The Christian Bible is divided into two parts, the Old and New Testament. The New Testament is concerned with Jesus' life and teachings. But the relationship of the New to the Old Testament is not a simple one.

A. On the one hand, Jesus stresses that his message is new:

> *21. No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse.*
>
> *22. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles* (Mark 2:21–22, KJV).

B. Yet, on the other hand, the New Testament also claims that it continues the Old, that both tell one coherent story. The Gospels, the four books that tell the story of Jesus' life, consistently refer back to the Old Testament. Mark, for example, begins his gospel by quoting Isaiah 40:3:

> *2. As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.*
>
> *3. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.* (Mark 1:2–3, KJV)

Each of the other gospels also refers to the Old Testament. Matthew

traces Jesus' lineage through King David back to Abraham. Luke begins by having the Angel Gabriel, who earlier appeared in the Old Testament book of Daniel, announce to Mary that her son will inherit *"the throne of his father David; And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."* (Luke 1:32–33, KJV) The famous prologue to the Gospel of John alludes to the beginning of Genesis: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."*

This pattern, in which the New Testament recalls Old Testament prophecy and then shows how Jesus fulfills it, is called typology. Typology demands that Christians read the Old Testament primarily as a prediction of the life of Christ. Within typology, the old must yield to the authority of the new.

II. Jesus and Typology

The gospels depict Jesus reading the Old Testament typologically. Sometimes he quotes an Old Testament prophecy and shows how he himself fulfills it. But he also interprets Old Testament narratives as if they, too, are prophetic. Typology assumes that every story in the Old Testament offers types for Jesus to fulfill. This demonstrates that Jesus' coming is part of God's plan since the beginning of time. It solidifies Jesus' authority.

A. Typological prediction in the story of Jonah and the whale—Jesus' death and resurrection.

1. In Matthew 12 and Luke 11, Jesus interprets the story of Jonah and the whale typologically as a prediction of his own death and resurrection.

40. For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (Matthew 12:40, KJV)

Jonah and the Whale

The story of Jonah is a simple one. Jonah is a minor prophet who is called by God to preach to the residents of Nineveh. Jonah is afraid to do so as Nineveh is the capital of the Assyrian empire—one of Israel's enemies. Attempting to escape his preaching responsibilities, Jonah boards a ship. But God disrupts his journey by sending a tremendous storm. The frightened sailors aboard feel they are being punished for Jonah's crime, so they throw him overboard. But God saves Jonah by having a whale swallow him, and he lives safely for three days in its belly. Then God has the whale spit him out, and Jonah proceeds to Nineveh, where he convinces the citizens to repent.

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Jonah emerges from the whale.

2. Matthew sets this typological reading in the context of one of Jesus' confrontations with the Pharisees and Scribes—two groups who represent strict obedience to the Torah. They ask Jesus to perform some sign, to which he responds in Matthew 12:1: *"But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah."* The point of Jesus' interpretation of Jonah is that it shows he is one "greater than Jonah." "*The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here."* (Matthew 12:41, KJV) This verse shows a major purpose of typology: it attempts to demonstrate that the authority of the New Testament is greater than that of the Old.
3. In Matthew 12:41, Jesus also predicts the Last Judgment; here we see that, quite typically, typology leads to anagogy: the Old Testament text, besides predicting the life of Jesus, also predicts an event occurring in the afterlife.
4. Jesus predicts the Last Judgment as a warning to his audience: they should repent now in preparation for the Last Judgment. Thus, anagogy leads in turn to tropology: a moral directed at the reader, an injunction to repentance.

B. Typology patterns in the Book of Exodus.

The most important typological patterns informing the New Testament are those that interpret Exodus as a prediction of the life of Jesus. These patterns attempt to demonstrate that the New Covenant announced by Jesus fulfills the Old Covenant that God formed with the Israelites at Mount Sinai.

There are numerous typological references in the Gospels to the events chronicled in the book of Exodus.

1. Mark recalls Isaiah's call to *"prepare the way of the Lord, make his path straight,"* an allusion to the literal journey of Exodus.
2. Matthew perhaps contains the greatest number of references to Exodus, because he wrote for Jewish Christians. Matthew sends the infant Jesus to Egypt to fulfill the prophecy: *"out of Egypt have I called my son."* (Matthew 3:15, KJV)

The Gospels' references to Exodus gather density in those passages that portray the suffering and death of Jesus. Those are the events that usher in the New Covenant.

In Luke 22:15–19, we see Jesus eating the Last Supper with his disciples.

15. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:

16. For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

17. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves:

18. For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.

19. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. (Luke 22:15–19, KJV)

Jesus is observing the Passover, which is a celebration of the Exodus. But the manner in which Jesus celebrates this feast begins a new ritual that becomes the main liturgical celebration among Christians, known as the Lord's Supper or Eucharist. The tropology we take away from this story is that Jesus died for our sins. For Christians, the center of salvation history is not the Exodus but Christ's crucifixion and resurrection.

III. Exodus as Model

The Exodus story with its typological, tropological, and anagogical meanings furnished a model for Christian literature. We'll look at how the Exodus narrative provides the narrative plot for Dante's *Divine Comedy* and John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

A. In Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Dante portrays himself as making a literal journey through Hell and Purgatory to Heaven. This journey corresponds to the Israelites' journey from Egypt to the Promised Land.

B. In John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, the main character is Christian. Like the Israelites in Exodus, Christian successfully crosses a raging river, walks through a wilderness, and arrives at a land that flows with milk and honey. Bunyan is obvious in his typological analogies, explaining each metaphor.

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Communion wine

The Jewish Roots of the Last Supper/Eucharist

Passover is the oldest continuously observed holiday in the history of the human race. It is celebrated in remembrance of the Jews' deliverance from Egyptian slavery. Passover began when the tenth plague, in which God brought death to the firstborn in Egypt, "passed over" the Israelites who had placed lambs' blood on their doorposts. Sacrificing a lamb then became a reminder of God's liberation of the Jews. Eventually, Christians believe, Jesus would become the "Lamb of God" in sacrificing himself to free the world of its sins. His sacrifice is commemorated in the Lord's table, or Eucharist—a ritual modeled on the Passover meal where Jesus offered bread to represent His body and wine to represent the blood shed on the cross. The word "Eucharist" literally means "to give thanks" for God's gifts.

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The Parted Water Closes Over Pharaoh's Men

An illustration of a scene from Exodus, chapter 14, in which the waters parted to let Moses and the Israelites through the Red Sea before closing over the heads of the pursuing Egyptians.

Summary

In this lecture, we've examined typology, the manner in which the New Testament presents its relationship to the Old: In typology, the Gospels continually invoke the Old Testament as a prophecy of the life of Christ; Christ's life not only fulfills the Old Testament but simultaneously and paradoxically ends its authority. The authority that Jesus establishes in the Gospels, however, continues to the end of the world and beyond. To demonstrate this continuing authority, the New Testament's typological interpretations often show that Jesus' life not only fulfills the Old Testament, but that it also predicts his return in triumph at the Last Judgment. Most importantly, the continuing teaching authority of Jesus should rule the Gospels' reader; hence, typology's end result should be tropology: the reader's awareness of a need to repent.

We've looked at two biblical narratives that employ the four-fold method of typological interpretation. Jesus' interpretation of the sign of Jonah is a Gospel narrative that, in spite of its brevity, shows the complex view of time that typology teaches. The Jonah story is just one of many typological narratives imbedded in the Gospels. Of these, the most significant is the Exodus. Exodus is the story of God's covenant with Israel, where God gives Israel the Law. By depicting Jesus' life as repeating the Exodus, the Gospels make the claim that Jesus is the New Moses who gives the New Law—the very New Testament that Bible owners read. This New Covenant, for Christians, is the fulfillment of the Old Covenant given by God at Mt. Sinai.

Since Christian typology is an interpretive system designed to make a reader realize his or her own place in human history, and the need to repent now, it has exerted a tremendous influence on Christian writers whose main goal is to strike such awareness into the hearts of their readers. Christian authors like Dante and Bunyan adapt the journey-narrative of Exodus for their own typological programs.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Does typology refer to more than the comparison between the Old Testament and the New Testament?
2. Another great story of pilgrimage is seen in Chaucer. Can you illuminate?
3. How does typology, as a literary device, aim to involve the reader in active interpretation?

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Websites to Visit

The *Jesus Institute* website is dedicated to presenting historical information about Jesus without religious affiliation — www.jesus-institute.org

Recorded Books

Alighieri, Dante. *The Inferno of Dante*. Translated by Robert Pinsky. Narrated by George Guidall. UNABRIDGED. Recorded Books. 4 cassettes/5.25 hours or 4 CDs/5.25 hours.

Lecture 12: Parables: The Form of Jesus' Preaching

The Suggested Readings for this lecture are Mark 4:1–34, Matthew 13, Luke 10, and Luke 15 (Bible, KJV).

Introduction

In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which share a similar perspective on Jesus and hence are called synoptic, Jesus teaches through simple, brief narratives termed parables. The parables' apparent simplicity, however, belies their sophistication as both theology and literature. Here we'll look at the Parable of the Sower—the first parable Jesus tells—as a model for how all of Jesus' parables seek to engage both the minds and hearts of their audience. And we'll approach this parable through the now-classic definition of the parable genre offered by C.H. Dodd in his 1935 book, *The Parables of the Kingdom*.

Consider this . . .

1. What is the difference between a parable and a fable?
2. Why did Jesus speak in parables?
3. How does a parable explain the kingdom of heaven?

I. The Form of Jesus' Preaching

We begin by reading Mark's version of the "Parable of the Sower."

3. Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow:

4. And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.

5. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth:

6. But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.

7. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.

8. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.

9. And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

10. And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.

11. And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery

of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables:

12. *That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.*
13. *And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?*
14. *The sower soweth the word.*
15. *And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.*
16. *And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness;*
17. *And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.*
18. *And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word,*

Jesus as a Preacher

A nineteenth-century depiction of Jesus giving the "Sermon on the Mount"

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The beginning of the Gospel of John identifies Jesus as the Word: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"* (John 1:1). The KJV's "word" translates John's original Greek *logos*, a term, originating in Stoic philosophy, for the principle of divine order in the cosmos that manifests itself in language. Jesus may be this logos specifically, but the Bible associates him in a more general way with language, particularly with spoken language. All four evangelists emphasize Jesus' preaching career, and Matthew gives it special attention, organizing his gospel into five sermons, of which the first is the famous "Sermon on the Mount" (Matthew 5–7). The three synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke—so called because they share a similar view of Jesus—focus on Jesus' use of parables for teaching, though they also show him teaching through other means, including quoting and interpreting Scripture, direct exhortation, stinging denunciation of his critics, proverbial statements, and prophetic utterance. John gives a somewhat different picture of how Jesus preached; he portrays Jesus making explicit theological claims about himself, his divinity, and his relationship with his Father. This theology, however, intertwines with a sort of mystical poetry as Jesus defines his mission by comparing himself to everyday objects: Jesus is *"the bread of life"* (John 6:35), *"the door of the sheep[fold]"* (John 10:7), *"a light into this world"* (John 12:46), *"the true vine"* (John 15:1). In his use of concrete metaphors, the theological Jesus of John is not that far from the homely preacher of the synoptics.

19. *And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.*

20. *And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.* (Mark 4:3–20, KJV)

A. We'll approach the Sower through the definition of parable offered by C.H. Dodd: a parable is *"a metaphor or simile, drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application, so as to tease it into active thought."*

1. Dodd argued that the parables are metaphors for the kingdom of heaven.
2. The metaphors of the parables are drawn from common life to show the reality and achievability of his messianic kingdom. In "The Sower," the common elements of agriculture show the nature of the kingdom.
3. The parable, despite its homeliness, contains odd details that complicate it. Its complexity arises from the essentially inadequate nature of the metaphor. No metaphor can completely describe the object it represents. So in "The Sower," details suggest that this parable doesn't completely

Matthew's Version of the Parable of the Sower
(Matthew 13:3–13)

3. *And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;*
4. *And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:*
5. *Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:*
6. *And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.*
7. *And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:*
8. *But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.*
9. *Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.*
10. *And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?*
11. *He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.*
12. *For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.*
13. *Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.*

describe God's kingdom. The Sower is like no human sower; he wastes seeds, throwing them where they would not grow. Jesus is showing that the Kingdom of Heaven is not like an earthly farm with an earthly farmer.

4. The purpose of these odd details is to engage the audience intellectually, leaving the listener in doubt as to the meaning.

B. But we can go beyond Dodd's definition of the parables, however illuminating it may be. We'll go beyond Dodd, once again by examining the "Parable of the Sower," to see that the parables aim to inspire not just intellectual engagement but heartfelt repentance and moral action.

1. The oddest detail in Mark's version of the Sower is Jesus' claim that he offers deliberately obscure teaching so that his hearers will not be converted.

a. The parable presents itself as obscure. Jesus even rebukes the disciples for not understanding his parable:

In verse 13: *"And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?"*

He then explains that he is being deliberately obscure so people won't understand:

Parable of the Good Samaritan

A certain lawyer tested Jesus by asking him what he must do "to inherit eternal life." Jesus directs him to the law as a guide, and the lawyer responds that the law dictates "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Still, the lawyer asks, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus replies with one of his most-loved parables, "The Good Samaritan":

30. And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

31. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

33. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

34. And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

35. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

36. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

37. And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise. (Luke 10:30–37, KJV)

11. And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables:

12. That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. (Mark 4:11–12, KJV)

b. This obscurity doesn't seem to match with other passages in Mark, which suggest that Jesus uses parables so that his audience will understand and be saved, as in Mark 4:2, for example: *"And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine."* Or verse 22: *"For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad."*

2. Jesus' claim of deliberate obscurity is designed to engage the reader, who should come to understand that the parable has to be approached not just intellectually but morally: this parable, like all parables, calls not only for Dodd's "active thought" but also for moral action.
3. This call to action appears in each of Jesus' other parables as well. The "Parable of the Sower" is the key to the others. All of the parables are about the fruits of action. The "Parable of the Prodigal Son," in Luke, teaches repentance and forgiveness. The "Parable of the Good Samaritan" teaches us to help all those in need regardless of who they are. All of these parables can be studied and interpreted at length, but their main purpose is to inspire action.

Summary

Here we've examined the "Parable of the Sower" as a model for all of Jesus' parables. The Sower at first looks deceptively plain: Jesus' simple story of how a farmer sowed seed is almost immediately followed by his explanation: the seed is the Word of God, and the different sorts of ground represent different classes of audience who hear the Word. This apparent simplicity, however, is interrupted by Jesus' troubling statement that his teaching is deliberately obscure. This claim that the parable we're reading is meant to be obscure is perplexing, among other reasons, because it contradicts the parable's obvious clarity: the parable broadcasts its own interpretation. Jesus' claim that the parable is obscure can be understood as another odd detail designed by the evangelist to attract the contemplation of the reader, who should begin to question whether he or she really understands the parable. In our questioning, we look to the parable again—to discover that true understanding of the parable entails not just an act of interpretation that shows we understand what the parable means, but a commitment to act on our understanding of the parable: the good ground in the parable is the only one to "bear fruit": to lead to action. Indeed, all of the parables are designed to produce active fruit, and some of Jesus' most beloved parables are those where the teaching is clearest: The "Parable of the Prodigal Son" teaches us to repent our sins as well as to forgive those of others, and the "Parable of the Good Samaritan" teaches helping all those in need, regardless of who they are.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. Think of a modern story that works as a parable.
2. How is the “Parable of the Sower” a model for all parable interpretation?
3. How do parables aim to engage their readers in active interpretation?

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Lecture 13: Paul: The Letter and the Spirit of the Law

The Suggested Readings for this lecture are Acts 9, 10, 15:1–22, and Romans (Bible, KJV).

Introduction

Here we look at the oldest writings in the New Testament, the epistles—or letters—written by St. Paul. To Paul fell the theological problem of exactly how Christianity should relate to its parent religion, Judaism: Was Christianity a continuation of Jewish tradition or a break with it? For Paul, this question was practical as well as theological: Were Christians, whether they were Gentiles or Jews, bound to follow the Old Law of the Mosaic covenant? Paul's answer to these questions was paradoxical, managing to preserve the divine authority of the Old Law while simultaneously holding it nonbinding on Christians—as long as they followed the "spirit of the Law." Here we'll look briefly at how the Acts of the Apostles depicts both the crisis of the Law in the early church and the conversion of Paul from Pharisee to Christian. Then we'll turn to Paul's own writing on the Law, drawing primarily from his "Letter to the Romans." Lastly, we'll look at how Paul's teaching on the Law informs the literary depiction of sin and sanctity.

Consider this . . .

1. What are some examples in fiction where we see conversions like Paul's—where the convert becomes the zealot and furthers the faith?
2. When Paul wrote his letters, how did he intend for them to be read? By the church to whom he addressed each letter? By all Christians?

Paul's writings are the oldest in the New Testament and written for the purposes of establishing principles of doctrine and answering questions about Christian behavior. Paul wrote between 35 and 65 CE. Mark, the earliest evangelist, wrote his gospel around 65 CE. Matthew and John wrote around 80 to 90 CE. John may have written as late as 100 CE.

I. Acts of the Apostles

The Acts of the Apostles narrates the problem of the Law in the early church. At first the church viewed itself as a renewal of the Old Covenant and all of its Law; it was composed primarily of Jews. As the church began to attract Gentile converts, several theological questions needed to be answered.

A. Acts focuses on the circumcision controversy as a metaphor for the question of the Law. Gentiles argued that circumcision was not required by the new covenant, but only by the old covenant with Abraham.

B. Acts depicts the role of Paul in solving the problem of the Law, and also describes Paul's conversion from zealous defender of the Law to believing Christian.

1. Paul began his career as Saul and a persecutor of Christians.
2. But on the proverbial road to Damascus, he is converted.
3. In Damascus, Ananias baptizes Paul and tells him that he is to be God's *"chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel."* (Acts 9:15, KJV) This meant Paul was chosen to share the covenant with the Gentiles and interpret God's laws for them.

C. Now Paul must wrestle with how God's promise to the Israelites relates to his new covenant with the Church. Paul cannot simply discard the old covenant; in Romans 11:1 he states, *"I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin."*

D. Paul's dilemma is complicated: how can he uphold the traditions of the Law but not impose the restrictions of the Law on the Gentile converts?

II. Letter and Spirit of the Law

In his letter to the Romans, Paul solves the problem of the Law by dividing it into the Letter and the Spirit. Perhaps one of the best examples of Paul's explanation of this concept is 2 Corinthians 3:6: *"God also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."*

A. Paul argues that "the letter kills": Literal obedience to the Law cannot save. Paul states in Romans 3:20 that the Law doesn't save: *"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."*

Saul's Conversion

Saul, a Jew from the tribe of Benjamin, was born in Tarsus and claimed Roman citizenship. He was well educated in and zealous about Jewish Scripture and tradition. He studied under Gamaliel, a noted Jewish scholar in Jerusalem. As a member of the Pharisees (a group that held that Jews were bound by both scripture and tradition), he persecuted his fellow Jews who believed Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah. After a dramatic and transformational conversion experience—usually called the Damascus Road experience—he became known as Paul the Apostle. During his conversion experience, he saw a great light, was blinded, and was spoken to by God. Paul became a devout and avid disciple of Jesus Christ, an outstanding missionary of the first century, and the earliest author in the New Testament.

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Conversion of Saint Paul
by Michelangelo

B. But, Paul argues, "the spirit gives life." The true purpose of the Law is God's gift of faith. If one has faith, given by grace, one need not follow the law.

C. Paul regularly uses the metaphor of the soul and body to represent the spirit and letter of the law. For example, in Romans 7:

> *22. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:*
>
> *23. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.* (Romans 7:22–23, KJV)

D. Paul regularly associates the "letter of the law" with the body at its worst, advising Christians to walk after the spirit:

> *1. Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?* (Romans 7:1, KJV)
>
> *6. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.* (Romans 7:6, KJV)

III. A Part of God's Covenant

Paul feels the spirit of the law is the important part of God's covenant. Therefore, if the Gentiles are true Christians and practice Judeo-Christian ethics, they are following the intent of the law. He writes in Romans 3:14–15:

> *14. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:*
>
> *15. Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.* (Romans 3:14–15, KJV)

A. Paul also discusses the elements of the spirit, the most important of which is love or "charity."

"Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." (Romans 13:8, KJV)

His most famous praise of love appears in 1 Corinthians 13:

> *1. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.*
>
> *2. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.*
>
> *3. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*
>
> *4. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,*

5. *Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;*

6. *Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;*

7. *Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*

8. *Charity never faileth.* (1 Corinthians 13:1–8, KJV)

B. Paul views love along with faith as the paramount symbol of Christianity. For Paul, the end of the Law is faith, and he argues that the real meaning of the law—including circumcision—is faith. In Romans he gives his arguments in chapter 4, verses 9–11:

9. *Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.*

10. *How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.*

11. *And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.* (Romans 4:9–11, KJV)

C. He concludes his arguments that faith is really what saved Abraham, not his adherence to the Law or his circumcision. Faith fulfills the Law.

30. *Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.*

Christian Symbol—Agape

The Different Types of Love Used in the Scriptures

Hebrew and Greek both have a number of words to distinguish among different sorts of love, and these distinctions are lost in English translation because we have only the one word “love.” The KJV uses “love” and words related to it to translate various Hebrew nouns, verbs, and adjectives that name very different sorts of love, from sensual desire to compassionate mercy.

The translators of the KJV were somewhat more careful in rendering New Testament Greek, using “love” to translate only *agape*, “selfless love”—the term Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 13, where the KJV calls it “charity”—and *phileo*, a more general term that can range from the hypocrite’s desire for praise in Matthew 6:5 to the Father’s love for the Son in John 5:20. Elsewhere, the KJV New Testament attempts to strictly translate terms for different sorts of love, so that, for instance, *philadelphia* becomes “brotherly love” (as in Romans 12:10), *philanthropia* “love towards man” (Acts 28:2), and *philarguira* “love of money” (1 Timothy 6:10). The writers of the New Testament avoided the term *eros*, which connotes mainly sexual passion.

31. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law. (Romans 3:30–31, KJV)

IV. Literary Influence of Paul's Definitions

Paul's definitions of the spirit and letter of the law had an enormous literary influence on the depiction of both villains and heroes in literature.

A. Perhaps the clearest example of the influence of Paul's teaching on the letter and the spirit may be seen in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, where Shylock's insistence on his literal pound of flesh borrows heavily from Paul's writings about how the carnal letter kills.

1. The Jewish character Shylock wishes to entrap the Christian Antonio by entering into a legal agreement with him. If Antonio cannot repay money borrowed from Shylock, then let *"An equal pound of your fair flesh be cut off and taken in what part of your body pleaseth me"* (*Merchant of Venice,* Act 1, Scene 3, ll. 148–50) in a parody of circumcision. Shylock's association with the old Law runs throughout the play.
2. The Venetian Christians for whom Shylock is a foil speak with a vocabulary borrowed from Paul's discussion of the spirit. These characters use the phrase "by faith" and ask Shylock to forsake his pound of flesh in the name of love.
3. Shylock is finally defeated because the deadly letter of the law applies to him as well as to Antonio. If he takes blood along with the flesh, he will die because he has violated the letter of the law.
   a. The court scene in which Portia appeals to the intent of the law utilizes much Pauline vocabulary. (Act 4, Scene 1)
   b. Shakespeare's use of Paul's words is made even clearer in Portia's famous courtroom speech:

The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:
Tis mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown;
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this sceptred sway;
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,
Though justice be thy plea, consider this,
That, in the course of justice, none of us
Should see salvation . . .
(Act 4, Scene 1, ll. 182–198)

Is *The Merchant of Venice* Anti-Semitic?

Whether or not William Shakespeare, particularly in *The Merchant of Venice*, shared the anti-Semitism of his Elizabethan contemporaries has been much debated.

Illustration of Shylock (right), arguing with two other men in a scene from Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*

Some readers argue that the play contains plenty of evidence that Shakespeare was an anti-Semite. Certainly Shylock is an anti-Jewish stereotype: greedy, conniving, and violent, he is the very type of the so-called "stage Jew" who had been a stock comic villain in English plays for centuries. Shylock is also tainted with the "blood libel": his passionate desire for the Christian merchant Antonio's death, especially with his statement that "I'll go in haste, to feed upon / The prodigal Christian" (2.5.15–16), recalls the ludicrous yet frequent charges that Jews slaughtered and ate Christians as part of their religious rites. And certainly the Christian characters in the play despise Shylock simply because he is a Jew; all of them would no doubt agree, although perhaps more grammatically, with the clown Launcelot Gobbo's statement that "the Jew is the very devil incarnation" (2.2.25). Having written a play with so much anti-Semitism in it, some readers believe, Shakespeare would appear to be anti-Semitic himself.

Other readers disagree, saying that Shakespeare wished to critique the very anti-Semitism so prevalent in the play. The major piece of evidence for these readers is Shylock's famous "Hath not a Jew eyes?" speech that begins at 3.1.59, a speech that adduces the common humanity shared by Jews and Christians. Indeed, these readers argue, *Merchant* demonstrates, as when Shylock berates Antonio for his prior scorn (1.3.104 ff), that Shylock's hatred of Christians is the product of and answer to Christian hate. The play thus exposes the hypocrisy of the Christians in the play, who talk about love and mercy yet fail to extend them to Shylock.

The Merchant of Venice is, of course, a play and not a theological or political treatise. As a work of literature, it does not offer any unambiguous argument, and any statement about anti-Semitism we derive from it is a matter of interpretation. But while all readers may not agree about the degree of anti-Semitism in the play, most would agree that Shakespeare here offers plenty of matter for contemplating the question.

B. Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, like Shylock, insists on a literal reading of a contract; Faustus finds that the letter kills, whereas the faith he disdains would lead to life.

1. Faustus enters into a legal agreement with the devil that gives the devil Faustus's soul in exchange for twenty-four years of magical power. In the scene in which the agreement is sealed, the devil tells him, *"Thou must bequeath it solemnly and write a deed of agreement with thine own blood."* By entering into this contract, Faustus is bound by the "letter of the law."
2. In act 5, scene 1, an old man appears to appeal to Faustus in the name of Pauline Christian virtues: This is what he says,

> Gentle son. I speaketh not in wrath,
> Or envy of thee, but in tender love,
> And pity of thy future misery.
> And so have hope, that this my kind rebuke,
> Checking thy body, may amend thy soul.
> I see an angel hovers o'er thy head,
> And with a vial full of precious grace,
> Offers to pour the same into thy soul.
> Then call for mercy and avoid despair.
> (Act 5, Scene 1, ll. 49–53, 60–63)

3. But Faustus rejects this appeal and chooses damnation over faith.

Summary

Here we saw that it fell to Paul, as the Apostle to the Gentiles, to solve the crisis that the Torah caused for the early Church. As the Book of Acts depicts, some in the early Church argued that the Jewish covenant and its laws, including circumcision and dietary purity, was binding on all Christians. Gentile converts to Christianity, however, were loath to be circumcised or to abandon their usual dietary practices.

Paul solved the crisis through an allegorical reading of the Law: Christians were not bound to follow the Old Testament Law literally—because "the letter kills"—but were bound to fulfill the ethical, moral, and religious teachings that the Law was designed to propagate. Most particularly, Paul argues, the Christian is to have faith, which is a free gift of God, or a grace. Faith, along with love and other virtues, comprised for Paul the spirit of the Law—and it is "the spirit that gives life."

Paul's letters had a tremendous influence on the writers of the Gospels, and hence on Christian theology. The most important Christian theologians—including Augustine, Luther, Calvin—have drawn on them. Paul's influence, however, is not just theological but also literary, and we ended by looking at how some of English literature's most famous villains and tragic figures have exemplified Paul's teaching that "the letter kills but the spirit gives life."

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. How did Paul solve the problem of the Law in the early church?
2. Does Paul's teaching that faith alone saves mean that believers need not perform good works?
3. Is Paul's teaching that "the letter kills" anti-Semitic?

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Recorded Books

Shakespeare, William. *The Merchant of Venice*. Performed by a full cast. UNABRIDGED. Recorded Books. 2 cassettes/2.5 hours.

Lecture 14: The Book of Revelation and the Symmetry of the Christian Bible

The Suggested Reading for this lecture is the Book of Revelation (Bible, KJV).

Introduction

The final book of the Christian Bible, the Revelation of St. John the Divine, is the Bible's most extensive piece of apocalyptic literature—a vision, set forth in elaborate and arcane symbols, of the end of the current, corrupted world order, and its replacement by a new and perfected cosmos. The Book of Revelation gives the Christian Bible a strong sense not only of closure but of symmetry, for just as history began in Genesis 1 with the creation of the heavens and earth, so it ends with the creation of a new heaven and new earth, in which elements of Eden reappear within the Holy City, the New Jerusalem.

Consider this . . .

To what sort of readers is Revelation most likely to appeal? What sort of readers are less likely to find its vision of history appealing?

I. What Is Apocalyptic Literature?

D.H. Lawrence said, *"By the time I was ten years old I am sure I had heard, and read, that book [Revelation] ten times over . . . It has had, and perhaps still has more influence than the gospels or [Paul's] epistles."*

A. An apocalypse is a vision of the world being replaced by a new and better world. An apocalypse is the Greek term for the word revelation.

B. The biblical genre of apocalyptic literature may be traced to Isaiah 24–27, Daniel 7–12, and Mark 13 (the so-called "Marcan apocalypse"); the Book of Revelation is, however, the Bible's most extensive piece of apocalyptic literature.

C. John Milton, from his *The Reason of Church Government* (1642), had this to say about the biblical book of Revelation: *"The Apocalypse of St. John is the majestic image of a high and stately tragedy, shutting up and intermingling her solemn scenes and acts with a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies."*

D. The biblical scholars John Gabel and Charles Wheeler had this to say about why Revelation was written: *"The author believed his own days to be the worst possible days and thus surely the last days . . . The faithful were to be encouraged to persevere during this bad time, because their deliverance was soon to come."*

E. The deliverance of the faithful was to come, as in the words of Rufus Jones, *"the fierce comfort of an apocalyptic relief expedition from the sky."*

F. Apocalypses speak especially to proud and oppressed peoples who have despaired of ever saving themselves through their own merely human efforts. Gabel and Wheeler say apocalyptic writings envision *"a flash of divine power, followed immediately by harsh punishment for those who have taken advantage of the misery of others and, conversely, by glorious rewards for those who have suffered undeservedly."*

II. The Historical Context of Revelation

The Book of Revelation was written around 95 A.D. by St. John of Patmos for his fellow Christians of Asia Minor (present-day Turkey), who suffered persecution under the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian. (81–96 CE).

A. There are a number of allusions to persecution under Domitian in Revelation. For example, in chapter 1, verse 9, "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." Roman authorities often banished individuals to islands like Patmos.

B. John also mentions other elements of persecution in Revelation 2:13 (the death of a martyr) and arrest of other Christians in chapter 2:10.

Daniel: The Apocalypse of the Old Covenant

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A depiction of Daniel interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream

The Old Testament, like the New, contains a single apocalyptic book, Daniel. A devout Jew exiled to the court of Babylon, Daniel interprets the prophetic dreams of a number of emperors. One of these dreams is apocalyptic: Nebuchadnezzar dreams of a statue, composed of layers of varying metals, destroyed by a large stone. Daniel interprets the statue as a succession of idolatrous empires, all of which come to an end with God's establishment of *"a kingdom which shall never be destroyed"* (Daniel 2:44). Daniel himself has four apocalyptic visions, interpreted for him by the angel Gabriel. Two of these—detailed in chapters 7 and 8—consist of a series of grotesque beasts that represent the empires of the Babylonians, Medes, Persians, and Greeks. Their reigns are ended when *"the Ancient of Days"* judges the world and gives power to *"one like the Son of Man"* (Daniel 7:13). Chapter 9 also looks forward to the end of oppressive empires but uses numerical rather than zoomorphic symbols. Chapters 10, 11, and 12 describe a single vision that culminates in Daniel's prophecy of the resurrection of the dead: *"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt"* (Daniel 12:2).

III. The Symmetry of the Christian Bible

According to the Christian Bible, the plot of history is symmetrical: it begins with the creation of heaven and earth, and ends, after a wave of purifying violence, with the creation of a new heaven and earth.

A. Christianity provides a prospective view of history, always looking ahead. Man begins in paradise and is looking forward to another paradise. This is echoed in chapter 1:8 of Revelation in the first words attributed to God, *"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."*

B. The new heaven and earth will only come after a period of horrific violence destroying the world. This purifying violence comes from the opening of seven seals and the sounding of seven trumpets. First there are the four horsemen, then the natural disasters that echo the plagues in Exodus.

C. The most disturbing image of destruction comes in chapter 14:19–20:

19. And the angel thrust his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

Number Symbolism in the Book of Revelation

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The apocalypse of Revelation

The Book of Revelation is a vision set forth in elaborate and arcane symbols of the events that will bring the current world order to an end, and introduce in its stead a new and perfected earth, figured in the text as the "New Jerusalem." By envisioning history in cosmic terms, using symbolic imagery, John sought to comfort and encourage the Church during the time of Roman persecution. To interpret Revelation one must come to know the symbolic meaning of the terms being used in almost the same way as a person trying to break a code. An understanding of numerology is helpful. Many numbers have symbolic meaning. Thus seven symbolizes completeness and perfection. God's work of creation was perfect and completed in seven days. The seven churches (Rev. 2:3) symbolize by their number all the churches. After seven the most significant number is twelve. The tribes of Israel and the disciples number twelve. New Jerusalem has twelve gates. Its walls have twelve foundations (21:12–14). The tree of life yields twelve kinds of fruit (22:2). Multiples of twelve are important. The 144,000 servants of God (7:4) are made of 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. Three as a symbolic number often indicates completeness. Thus the Trinity is the complete God. Four is often used as a sacred number. Thus one reads of the four living creatures surrounding God (4:6–7). God sends forth the four horsemen of the Apocalypse (6:1–8) to bring destruction to the earth.

20. *And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.* (Revelation 14:19–20, KJV)

D. This carnage ends the world as we know it. Poised between this destruction and the new kingdom is the 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth—The Millennium. In the words of Revelation:

1. *And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.*
2. *And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,*
3. *And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.* (Revelation 20:1–3, KJV)

The Millennium of Revelation corresponds to the seventh day of rest in Genesis 1–2, in a sort of mystic symmetry.

E. After the Millennium is over the world will come to an end. Then comes the Final Judgment where the evil are thrown into the lake of fire. Then arises the climax of John's vision—a version of Eden reappears within the Holy City of the end-time, the New Jerusalem.

1. *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.*
2. *And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*
3. *And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.*
4. *And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*
5. *And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.*
6. *And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.* (Revelation 21:1–6, KJV)

We also see a replica of Eden (Genesis 2) in the New Jerusalem.

1. *And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.*
2. *In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations*. (Revelation 22:1–2, KJV)

In the end the garden (Eden) will reconcile with the city (Jerusalem), and nature will reconcile with art.

IV. Can Eden Be Regained?

Before the historical end-time, can Eden be in some sense regained, internally, within the individual believer?

A. Milton's Christian answer is that the individual believer can cultivate *"a paradise within thee, happier far."* (*Paradise Lost* 12:585–87)

B. English authors after Milton share his idea of a paradise within, though many don't share his Christian faith. Thus began the Romantic movement, one that searched for a paradise within, often through nature.

C. Wordsworth's post-Christian answer: to the mind wedded to Nature, paradise might be *"a simple produce of the common day."* ("Prospectus" to *The Recluse*)

> *Paradise, and groves*
> *Elysian, Fortunate Fields—like those of old*
> *Sought in the Atlantic Main—why should they be*
> *A history only of departed things,*
> *Or a mere fiction of what never was?*
> *For the discerning intellect of Man,*
> *When wedded to this goodly universe*
> *In love and holy passion, shall find these*
> *A simple produce of the common day.*
>
> ~William Wordsworth, *The Recluse*

This holy marriage with the external universe creates a new world.

D. This longing to recover paradise is shared by Blake, Coleridge, and Shelley, and in a different form by Marx.

E. T.S. Eliot gives us a sentiment we can apply to this course on the Bible as a whole. He first announces ("East Coker," No. 2 of *Four Quartets*), *"In my beginning is my end."* He ends with

> *We shall not cease from exploration*
> *And the end of all our exploring*
> *Will be to arrive where we started*
> *And know the place for the first time.*
>
> ~T.S. Eliot, "Little Gidding," No. 4 of *Four Quartets*

Summary

The Christian Bible constitutes an account of the world and of humanity from beginning to end: from a paradise lost at the beginning of time, to an equivalent paradise regained at the end of time as we know it. The Christian scheme of history involves humanity in a circuitous journey back to its original blessedness, but in the end paradise will be everlasting. Christian theology since Paul and Augustine has suggested that aspects of the paradise at the end of time might be recovered internally within the individual believer. This thirst for and belief in an inner paradise takes a post-Christian turn in the literature of the English Romantics: to Wordsworth and others, the return to Eden symbolizes a return to our primal sympathies with nature and with one another.

FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING

Questions

1. What is an "apocalypse," and why do apocalyptic visions typically involve extensively detailed violence and destruction?
2. In what ways are Eden and the New Jerusalem similar, and in what ways are they different?
3. What does it mean to internalize the apocalypse?

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2. *Everypoet* website features the text of Wordsworth's *The Recluse* —
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3. The text of T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* —
   http://www.tristan.icom43.net/quartets

Allegory: A text that contains a meaning that is other than literal, or such a nonliteral meaning.

Anagogy: An allegorical meaning that concerns the Last Judgment or the afterlife.

Apocalypse: From the Greek *apocalypsis,* meaning "to uncover" or "to reveal" (cf. the anglicized Latin term *revelation*). What apocalyptic visions reveal—often through arcane and elaborate symbolism—are the imminent events that will bring an end to the present, corrupt world order, and bring about a new and perfected cosmic order under messianic or divine rule.

Bereshith: Hebrew for "In the beginning," the first words—and Hebrew title—for the first book of the Bible.

Blazon: A literary description, usually of a beautiful woman, that proceeds from head to toe and that compares each part of the woman's body to a different object.

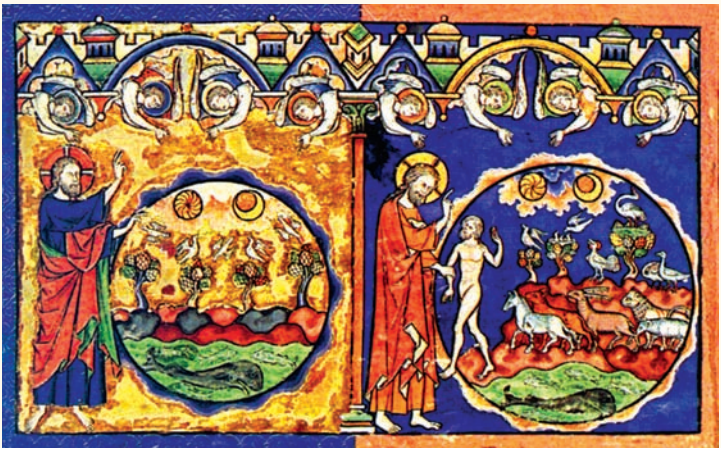
Chiasmus: A sequence of two phrases or clauses that are parallel in syntax, but with a reversal of the order of words. For example, from Psalm 1:2: "His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."

Christ: See Messiah.

Circumcision: Removal of the foreskin of an eight-day-old male. Symbol of the covenants God makes with Abraham (Gen. 17) and Moses (Exod. 4: 24–46). Whether Gentile Christians should be circumcised and otherwise follow the Law was a controversy in the early church. (Acts 15)

Covenant: A legal contract. The Bible depicts divine-human relations as a covenant. God forms covenants with Noah (Gen. 9), Abraham (Gen. 15, 17), and with the nation of Israel (Exod. 20–24). Jesus announces a New Covenant (Matth. 26: 26–29) that Christians believe fulfills the Old Covenant.

Documentary Hypothesis: A scholarly theory, first advanced by Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918) but now widely accepted, that attributes composition of the Torah not to any one author but to generations of anonymous writers, revisers, and editors (redactors), who produced and then assembled four hypothetical sources: the J (Yahwist), E (Elohist), D (Deuteronomist), and P (Priestly). These sources are thought to span roughly five hundred years, from the earliest—J in the tenth century BCE—to the latest, P in the late sixth or early fifth century.



Illumination of the Story of Creation from a Bible, ca. 1930

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Elohim: "Gods," plural, used in Hebrew to refer to the gods of other nations, but also used as a term of respect (like the English "Lord") for Yahweh.

Epistle: A letter to a community; the usual literary form of teaching by Paul and other writers in the New Testament.

Eucharist: Literally "thanksgiving," name for the Christian ritual of bread and wine that commemorates Jesus' Last Supper; also known as Communion or the Lord's Supper.

Genesis: The Greek title of the first book of the Bible (from the Septuagint translation, third century BCE); the word means "coming into being."

Gentile: A non Jew.

Gospel: Text describing the life and teachings of Jesus. English translation of the Greek term *evangelium* (literally "good news").

Hypotactic Style: A style (in contrast to the paratactic) that uses words such as "when," "then," "because," and "afterwards" to express temporal, logical, or causal connections between successive clauses or sentences.

Iconoclasm: The destruction of religious images, or opposition to the use of images in religious worship.

Idol: A material object that possesses extraordinary powers because a god or some quasi-divine force lives inside it.

Last Judgment: Christ's return at the end of time to judge the living and the dead.

Law: The first five books of the Bible, traditionally attributed to Moses: see Torah. In the New Testament, "Law" often refers to the practice of Judaism, especially ritual worship and dietary laws.

Messiah: In Hebrew, "anointed," a term translated into the Greek *christos*, from whence the title "Christ." In Israel, priests and kings, both anointed with oil, were termed messiahs. Later prophets forecast a messiah who would restore the kingdom of David; the New Testament assigns Jesus this role.

Messianic Secret: The gospel of Mark depicts Jesus instructing his followers and devils to keep his messiahship a secret. Scholars believe that this "messianic secret" is Mark's attempt to explain why not all Jews accepted Jesus as the messiah.

Millennium: The one-thousand-year reign of Christ on earth described in Revelation 20:1–8, during which time Satan will be bound and after which he will briefly be set loose.

Parable: A brief story using familiar characters and objects that Jesus uses in the synoptic gospels to explain the nature of his messianic kingdom.

Parallelism: The juxtaposition of two or more clauses that contain related ideas. For example, in Psalm 148:1—"Praise ye the Lord from the heavens: praise him from the heights"—the two clauses are almost identical in meaning (synonymous parallelism). Other types of parallelism are antithetic, when the two clauses are opposed in meaning (e.g., "He becometh poor who dealeth with a slack hand; but the hand of the diligent maketh rich," Proverbs 10:4), and synthetic, when the second clause completes the thought of the first clause (e.g., "As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly," Proverbs 26:11).

Paratactic Style: A style in which clauses or whole sentences are conjoined, one after another, without any expression of their relation or connection, or with only a weak conjunction such as, in English, "and."

Pentateuch: The Greek term (literally, "five scrolls") for the first five books of the Bible; may be used interchangeably with Torah.

Periphrasis: A roundabout way of saying something; circumlocution.

Pharisees: Members of a Jewish sect that taught strict observance not only of the Law but of rules passed on by oral tradition; the gospels depict them, along with the Scribes, as Jesus' opponents in religious debate.

Predestination: A theological doctrine holding that some individuals, the elect, were chosen by God, before birth, to receive grace and salvation; according to the system of "double predestination" developed by John Calvin (1509–1564), those not among the elect are among the reprobate, predestined to damnation.

Puritan: A term that first came into use in sixteenth-century England to describe Protestants who, influenced by the theologian John Calvin, sought to "purify" the state-established Church of England of its residual Catholic elements—from church hierarchy to church architecture—allowing only those practices explicitly authorized by scripture and by an ideal of what the primitive church was like in the first hundred or two hundred years after the death of Christ.

Scribes: Professional interpreters of Jewish law; the Gospels depict them, along with the Pharisees, as Jesus' opponents in religious debate.

Spinoza, Baruch: Dutch Jewish philosopher (1632–1677) best known for his naturalistic or pantheistic conception of the universe; was among earliest philosophers to systematically question the tradition of Mosaic authorship of the Torah.

Spring Topos: Conventional literary depiction of spring, usually depicting the emergence of new life; often an invitation to love, but sometimes to religious renewal.

Sublime, The: For Longinus, the "irresistible force and mastery" a powerful orator can exert over his audience. For Edmund Burke (and most later theorists), the quality that verbal (or visual) art has when it pleases or delights us through representing things—fierce beasts, for example—that could cause us pain were we to encounter them in reality.

Synoptic: Literally "same view," used to describe the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which share a similar view of the life and teachings of Jesus.

Testament: A contract; synonym for covenant.

Topos: A literary commonplace; a set description.

Torah: This term, which literally means in Hebrew "law" or "instruction," refers to the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

Tropology: An allegorical interpretation that addresses a moral to the reader.

Typology: An interpretive system wherein the New Testament quotes or alludes to a verse or narrative in the Old Testament, treating it as a prediction of an event in the life of Christ.

Yahweh: The personal name of Israel's god, represented in the Hebrew Bible by the four consonants of the Tetragrammaton (YHWH). Jehovah is a faulty English rendering of this sacred name by adding to the Tetragrammaton the vowel sounds for Elohim and Adonai, both titles of honor that may be rendered "Lord."

Zion: The fortified height within Jerusalem, about 2,440 feet high; site of David's palace, and later of Solomon's Temple.

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Modern Jerusalem, including the Dome of the Rock and the "Wailing Wall"

2000 BCE	Legendary time of Abram
1700 BCE	Israelites in Egypt
1300 BCE	Oppression in Egypt—Ramses II Pharaoh in Egypt
1250 BCE	Exodus under Moses
1200–1100 BCE	Conquest of Canaan
1200 BCE?	Philistine conquest of Southwest Canaan
1030 BCE	Establishment of kingdom under Saul
1000 BCE	David rules over the twofold kingdom of Israel-Judah
936 BCE	Death of Solomon; division of Davidic Kingdom into Israel (cap. Samaria) and Judah
722 BCE	Sargon II of Assyria conquers Israel and exiles its populace (10 Lost Tribes)
612 BCE	Fall of Assyria
604–562 BCE	Nebuchadnezzar reigns as King of Chaldean (New Babylonian) Empire
586 BCE	Nebuchadnezzar destroys Jerusalem and the Temple
586–536 BCE	Babylonian captivity
538 BCE	Babylon taken by Cyrus, King of Persia
536 BCE	Return to Jerusalem; Yahwism, once a minority sect, is fully established as Judaism, the national religion
516 BCE	New Temple built (New Temple stands till 70 CE)

I. An Anthology

According to a generally accepted theory, the Book of Isaiah is an anthology of the writings of three prophets, whose writings span the course of three centuries (750–450 BCE). The Book of Isaiah is thus commonly divided:

1. *Isaiah*: Chapters 1–39
2. *Deutero-Isaiah*: Chapters 40–55
3. *Trito-Isaiah*: Chapters 56–66

Note: "Deutero" is simply Greek for "second"; "Trito" is Greek for "third." This is how we refer to the authors, otherwise anonymous, of the later portions of the Book of Isaiah.

II. Identities of the Three Prophets

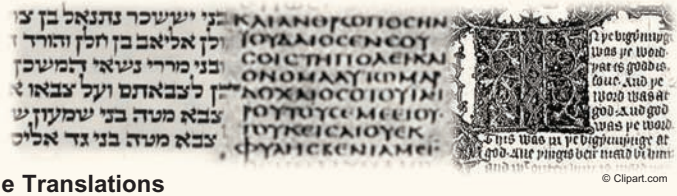
The first of these prophets is properly "Isaiah"; he is the prophet introduced in Isaiah 1:1, who lived "in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." Uziah ascended the throne in 780 BCE; Hezekiah died in 692 BCE. Thus, Isaiah's dates are (at least roughly) 780 BCE to 692 BCE. He is a man of the eighth century—indeed, Isaiah is commonly known as one of the four "eighth-century prophets," along with Hosea, Amos, and Micah. To read Isaiah intelligently requires at least some knowledge of the international affairs of his day. The most important events of his time are these:

745 BCE	Rise of Assyrian Empire
740 BCE	Isaiah begins prophesying
736–734 BCE	Ahaz rules Judah; Judah is attacked by Israel and Syria in an attempt to force Ahaz to join the anti-Assyrian coalition (see Isaiah, chapters 7–8)
732 BCE	Assyria conquers Syria (cap. Damascus)
722 BCE	Assyria conquers Israel ("northern kingdom," cap. Samaria); the Israelites are carried off into exile ("the ten lost tribes")
720 BCE	Hezekiah rules Judah
705 BCE	Sennacherib rules Assyria and makes Nineveh his capital
701 BCE	Sennacherib lays siege to Jerusalem; Judah survives, but is reduced to an Assyrian tributary (see Isaiah, chapters 36–39)

When you're reading Isaiah 1–39, there are (alas!) still a few more complications to keep in mind. Some of the chapters are interpolated—that is, added, at a much later date, to the original text of Isaiah. Chief among this interpolated material is the following:

1. Chapters 13–14: "The Burden of Babylon." You'll recall from your "historical chronology" (page 101) that the Babylonian Empire came to power after the fall of Assyria in 612 BCE: that is, more than eighty years after the death of Isaiah.
2. Chapters 24–27: "The Apocalypse of Isaiah" (a vision of the destruction of the earth and the salvation of Yahweh's people).

   These interpolations probably date from the time of the Jews' Babylonian Exile (586–536 BCE).
3. Toward the end of the exile there also arises the second prophet who speaks in the Book of Isaiah (chapters 40–55), the so-called Deutero-Isaiah. This "second Isaiah" addresses the Jews in Babylon, toward the end of their captivity. He foretells or recounts the fall of Babylon and announces "the new exodus" of the Jews who (will) return to their homeland. The history involved here is relatively simple. In 538 BCE, Babylon falls to Cyrus, the king of Persia, the new and rising empire of the period. (Cyrus is the great-grandfather of Xerxes, whose court provides the fictive setting of the Book of Esther.) Since Cyrus' conquest of Babylon was the event that liberated the Jews from their fifty-year captivity, the Deutero-Isaiah represents Cyrus as Yahweh's own instrument; chapter 41 refers to Cyrus as "the righteous man from the east," and chapter 45 refers to him as the Lord's "anointed one," or (as transliterated from the Hebrew) "Messiah." (This is the only place in the Hebrew Bible in which a foreigner is called the Lord's "anointed.")
4. The third and last prophet we hear in the Book of Isaiah is the Trito-Isaiah (chapters 56–66). This "third Isaiah" addresses the Jews who have returned to Judah; his utterances may be dated to about 450 BCE. His tone is generally more somber than that of the Deutero-Isaiah; the glorious expectations occasioned by the fall of Babylon have by now given way to the day-to-day disappointments of postexilic Judah. The Trito-Isaiah concludes, however, with a rousing vision of a glorious future, wherein Yahweh will "create new heavens and a new earth" (65:17).



I. Bible Translations

Translations of the Bible have been based mainly on the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts, and on two early translations.

A. *Septuagint.* A translation of the Hebrew Bible (the "Old Testament") into Greek; it was made for the Jews of Alexandria in the third century BCE. This Greek version was, according to tradition, based on the work of seventy scholars, and is therefore known as the Septuagint, from a Latin word meaning "seventy."

B. *Vulgate.* St. Jerome's translation of the Bible into Latin for the common people (in Latin, the *Vulgus*) of the Roman world, about 400 CE.

II. Major English Translations and Timeline of Other Bible Events

A. *Wycliffite Bible.* Manuscript translation done by the followers of John Wycliffe in the 1380s; he saw the Bible as the sole rule of faith and practice for all, and was therefore opposed by the English church, which emphasized both scripture and tradition.

Circa 1450 Invention of printing from movable type.

B. *Tyndale Bible.* William Tyndale, living in Germany, translated the New Testament into English in 1526; in 1536, the Inquisition burned him at the stake as a heretic.

1522–1534 Martin Luther produces, in German, the first Western European Bible based on the original Hebrew and Greek, rather than on the Latin Vulgate.

1534 Parliament under Henry VIII separates English Church from the Church of Rome.

C. *Coverdale Bible.* First printed English Bible, 1535. Miles Coverdale used Tyndale's translation of the New Testament and the portions of the Old Testament that Tyndale had translated; Coverdale himself translated the rest of the Old Testament and the Apocrypha.

1552–1558 Reign of Henry's daughter Mary ("Bloody Mary"), who attempted to revive Roman Catholicism in England.

D. *Geneva Bible.* Done in 1560 by English Protestant scholars (including Coverdale) who had gone to the continent to escape Queen Mary's persecutions. This is the Bible Shakespeare knew. Its margins are filled with Calvinist theology (and damnations of other sects). Known also as the "Breeches Bible," from Gen. 3:7: "They sewed fig leaves together and made themselves breeches."

E. *Bishop's Bible.* Published in 1568, during Queen Elizabeth's reign; indebted to Tyndale/Coverdale.

F. *Douai-Rheims.* Translation of the Vulgate done by English Catholics in France; they completed the New Testament in 1582 and the Old Testament in 1609. This translation is marked by its Latinate style and diction.

G. *King James Version.* Published in 1611. King James (r. 1603–1625) assembled forty-seven scholars; they worked with biblical texts in the original languages, as well as with the Tyndale and Coverdale versions. Their translation included the Apocrypha, which was omitted in England beginning in 1826.

III. Comparisons of Genesis 4:1–3:

William Tyndale (1533)

"And Adam lay wyth Heva his wyfe, which conceaved and bare Cain, and sayd: I have gotten a man of the LORde. And she proceded forth and bare hys brother Abell: And Abell became a sheperde, and Cain became a ploweman. And it fortuned in processe of tyme, that Cain brought of the frute of the erth: an offerynge unto the LORde."

Geneva

"Afterwarde the man knewe Hevah his wife, which conceived & bare Kain, & said, I have obtained a man by ye Lord. And againe she brought forthe his brother Habel, and Habel was a keeper of sheep, & Kain was a tiller of the ground. And by process of time it came to pass, that Kain brought an oblation unto the Lord of the frute of the ground."

Douai-Rheims

"And Adam knew Eve his wife: who conceived and brought forth Cain, saying: I have gotten a man through God. And again she brought forth his brother Abel. And Abel was a shepherd, and Cain a husbandman. And it came to pass after many days, that Cain offered, of the fruits of the earth, gifts to the Lord."

New English Bible

"The man lay with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain. She said, 'With the help of the Lord I have brought a man into being.' Afterwards she had another child, his brother Abel. Abel was a shepherd and Cain a tiller of the soil. The day came when Cain brought some of the produce of the soil as a gift to the Lord . . ."

The Book of J

"Now the man knew Hava, his wife, in the flesh; she conceived Cain: 'I have created a man as Yahweh has,' she said when he was born. She conceived again: Abel his brother was born. Abel, it turned out, was a watcher of sheep, Cain, a tiller of soil. The days turned into the past; one day, Cain brought an offering to Yahweh, from fruit of the earth."

ARCTIC OCEAN
ATLANTIC
OCEAN
INDIAN OCEAN
Mediterranean Sea
Athens
Adana
Al Maws
Halab
SYRIA
Beirut
LEBANON
Damascus
Mediterranean Sea
Jerusalem
ISRAEL
Amman
IRAQ
Euphrates
Alexandria
JORDAN
Cairo
EGYPT
Nile
Red Sea
© Graphi-Ogre

The path of the Exodus has been re-created from biblical sources; archaeological evidence does not yet exist for this biblical episode.

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THE KINGDOM YEARS
Probable extent of Israelite control during the Kingdom of Solomon, c. 950 BCE.
The Kingdoms of Israel and Judah, c. 860 BCE.
Boundary between Israel and Judah
? Exact location questionable
0 75 miles
0 75 kilometers
The Great Sea (Mediterranean Sea)
Riblah
Zobah
Byblos
MT. LEBANON
Sidon
Phoenicia
Damascus
MT. HERMON
Tyre
Dan
ARAM (Syria)
Kedesh
Hazor
Acco
Sea of Chinnereth
Ashtaroth
Golan?
MT. CARMEL
Jokneam
Dor
Megiddo
Jezreel
Ramoth Gilead
Taanach
MT. GILBOA
Jabesh Gilead
Dothan
Tirzah
Zaphon
Samaria
Succoth
Shechem
Aphek
Shiloh
ISRAEL
Northern Kingdom
Joppa
Bethel
Ammon
Gezer
Mizpah
Heshbon
Philistia
Azekah
Jerusalem
Bethlehem
Ashkelon
Medeba
Adullam
Tekoa
Dibon
Gaza
Eglon?
Debir
Hebron
Aroer
Dead Sea (Salt Sea)
Ziklag?
Arad
Moab
Beersheba
Kir Hareseth
Zoar
JUDAH
Southern Kingdom
Bozrah
Kadesh Barnea
Brook of Egypt
Edom
Teman
Ezion Geber
Elath

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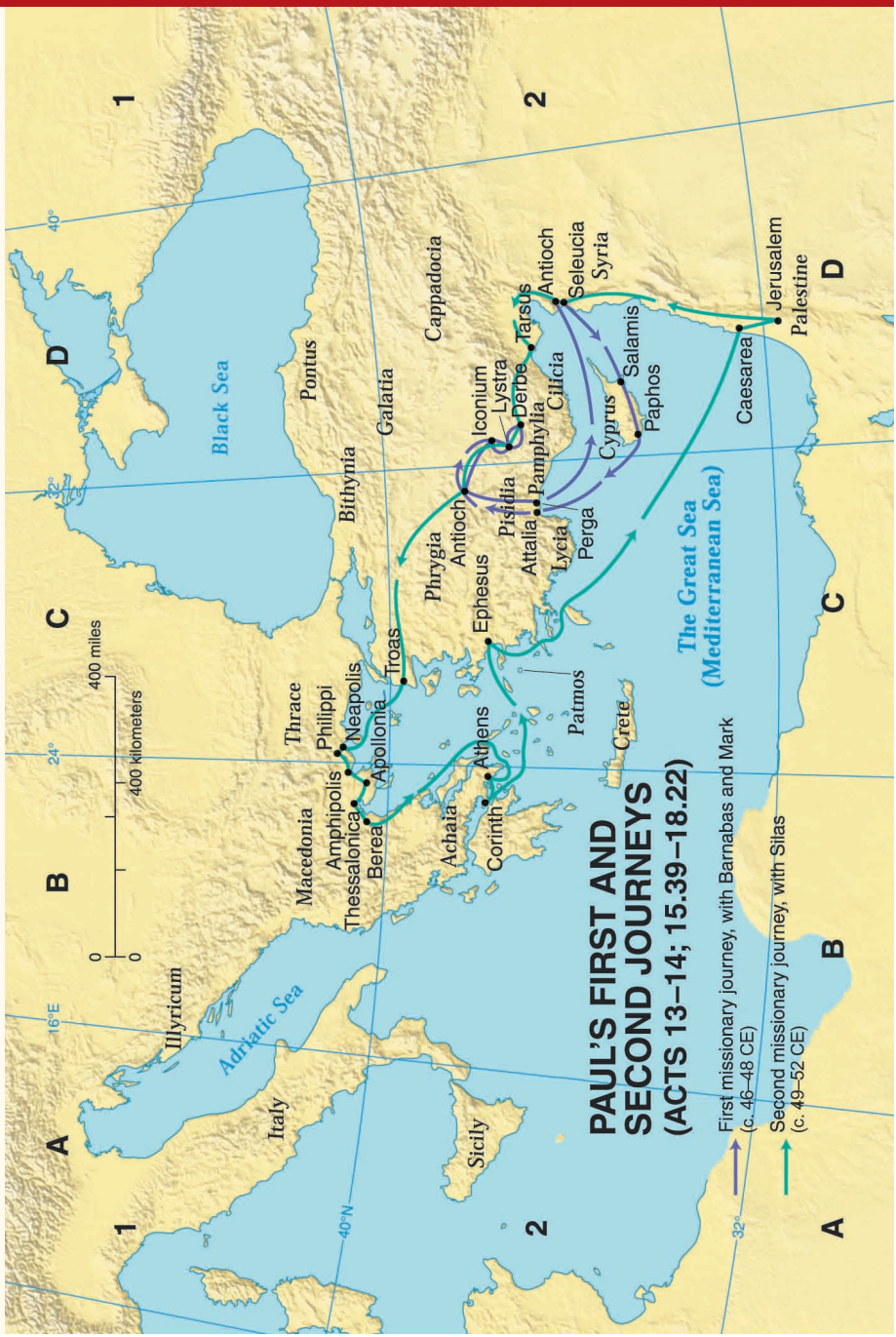
PAUL'S FIRST AND SECOND JOURNEYS (ACTS 13–14; 15.39–18.22)
First missionary journey, with Barnabas and Mark (c. 46–48 CE)
Second missionary journey, with Silas (c. 49–52 CE)
Black Sea
Adriatic Sea
The Great Sea (Mediterranean Sea)
Illyricum
Italy
Sicily
Macedonia
Thrace
Pontus
Bithynia
Galatia
Cappadocia
Phrygia
Pisidia
Pamphylia
Cilicia
Lycia
Attalia
Achaia
Amphipolis
Thessalonica
Berea
Philippi
Neapolis
Apollonia
Troas
Ephesus
Patmos
Crete
Athens
Corinth
Iconium
Lystra
Derbe
Tarsus
Antioch
Seleucia
Syria
Cyprus
Salamis
Paphos
Perga
Caesarea
Jerusalem
Palestine
400 miles
400 kilometers
0
0
16°E
24°
32°
40°
40°N
A
B
C
D
1
2

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